

Thatcher, Kohl apart on arms

DEIDESHEIM, West Germany (AP) — British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl ended three hours of frank talks Sunday still on opposite sides of a deep rift within NATO over nuclear arms. Speaking at a joint news conference after meeting in this German wine town, both vigorously defended their opposing stands on the short-range nuclear forces (SNF) issue threatening to overshadow the alliance's 40th anniversary summit May 29-30. But neither publicly addressed the key dispute — Bonn's call for early East-West talks to limit all SNF missiles. Officials said the hectic search for a consensus would continue until the Brussels summit. Thatcher, one of the strongest critics of Bonn's stand, stressed that NATO's 16 members had already agreed to update their ageing Lance SNF missiles and no one country could change this. She said it would be a disaster for NATO's doctrine of flexible response to invasion if all SNF arms were withdrawn from Europe. Washington and London fear a total ban could emerge from negotiations.

Jordan Times

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Red Sea oil spill contained

NICOSIA (R) — Saudi Arabia said Sunday that 15,000 barrels of oil poured into the Red Sea after an Indian tanker ran aground of Jeddah, but the spill had been contained. "The tanker (has been) refloated and the leaked oil has been contained by rubber booms," the Saudi Press Agency (SPA) quoted Minister of State Fayiz Badr as saying. He said officials would ensure that oil from the 283,878-tonne tanker Kanachenjanga, which hit Abu Nakhla reef Wednesday, would not reach the coast. The tanker, owned by the Shipping Corporation of India, was now in Jeddah port three miles from the reef and the crew were all unhurt. The SPA, quoted Badr as saying the tanker was sailing south from the Red Sea port of Yanbo with 265,000 tonnes of light oil when it hit the reef. About 15,000 barrels leaked into the sea. Al Shariq Al Ahsal, a London-based Arabic newspaper, quoted a source in Jeddah as estimating that 75,000 barrels leaked out while the ship's captain put the figure at 30,000 barrels. It quoted the captain as saying bad weather caused the accident.

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His Majesty King Hussein Saturday meets with a delegation representing the governorate of Tafileh (Petra photo)

Meets delegation from Tafileh King stresses need for national unity

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein met Sunday with prominent residents of the governorate of Tafileh and emphasised the need for national unity in efforts towards achieving the aspirations of the people and serving Arab interests.

"It has been our destiny to face the challenges and difficulties drawing from our determination from the message of the Great Arab Revolt, which our fathers and grandfathers have carried," the King said. "We are the soldiers of the blessed march, which represents the story of the struggle of this people on this Arab soil, that is part of the Great Arab World."

"We in this part of the Great Arab World, are one family and are united in one march. We follow the footsteps of the fathers and grandfathers to achieve the

objectives benefitting future generations.

The King stressed the theme of national unity. "May every Arab Jordanian living on this part of the Arab land be sure that any harm that touches any citizen touches me deeply," the King said.

"I have dedicated my life to perform my duties towards you. I am one of you, and we will continue to work and build, hand in hand, God willing, to achieve the aspirations and goals," he said.

King Hussein asked the delegation members to convey his love and appreciation to the citizens in Tafileh governorate.

Representatives of people from Tafileh voiced their full support for King Hussein's policies and denounced the riots which occurred in some parts of Jordan. These actions do not serve the country's interest, nor its security and stability, they said.

They also noted the great achievements made in Jordan under the directives of King Hussein and His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan and stressed that such achievements should be protected because they were the property of every Jordanian.

The meeting was attended by Prince Hassan, Royal Court Chief Thougoun Hindawi, King Hussein's Political Advisor Adnan Abu Odeh and a number of senior officials.



His Majesty King Hussein Sunday receives Soviet Deputy Prime Minister Yanadi Tarasov, who delivered to him a message from Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze (Petra photo)

King receives Soviet message

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Sunday received a message from Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, dealing with the developments in the Middle East, particularly the Palestine question.

Shevardnadze's message falls within the framework of the ongoing consultations between Jordan and the Soviet Union on issues of mutual concern. The message was delivered to King Hussein by visiting Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Yanadi Tarasov, who was received Sunday in a special audience attended by King Hussein's political Advisor Adnan Abu Odeh and Soviet Ambassador to Jordan Alexander Zinchuk.

Tarasov conveyed to King Hussein the best wishes of the Soviet leadership and briefed him on the outcome of contacts made by Shevardnadze to ensure the convening of an international peace conference and his informal consultations with the concerned international parties.

Tarasov listened to King Hussein's impressions and views following his recent talks in Washington with President George Bush on the Arab-Israeli conflict and the efforts for peace in the region.

New prime minister receives congratulation

AMMAN (Petra) — Sharif Zaid Ibn Shaker Sunday received congratulations of Jordanian officials, representatives of professional associations, charitable societies and notables from various parts of the country on his appointment as prime minister. The congratulations came from the director of the General Intelligence Department and his assistants, a number of former ministers, Senate members and deputies, provincial governors, chairmen of municipal and village councils and heads of tribes and notables.

They wished Sharif Zaid and the new government every success in serving Jordan.

Sharif Zaid also received congratulatory cables from his Algerian counterpart Qasidi Mirbah, Egyptian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Esmat Abdul Meguid, Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and the Soviet cabinet.

Kuwaiti premier due here today

KUWAIT (R) — Kuwaiti Prime Minister Sheikh Saad Al Abdullah Al Sabah will visit Jordan Monday, the Kuwaiti News Agency (KUNA) said.

"The visit of His Highness to Jordan stems from the prominent brotherly relations between Kuwait and Jordan and embodies the depth of the historical bonds between the two countries," the agency quoted Planning Minister Abdul Rahman Al Awadi as saying.

In a newspaper interview last Sunday, the emir of Kuwait, Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah, said Jordan's stability was a basic factor in regional stability. The emir was com-



Sheikh Saad Al Abdullah Al Sabah, Kuwaiti Prime Minister, is seen in a formal setting.

3-day holiday declared

AMMAN (Petra) — All ministries, government departments and public institutions will be closed for three days, starting Saturday May 6, in observance of 'Eid Al Fitr, according to an official communique issued by Prime Minister Sharif Zaid Ibn Shaker Sunday.

May Day

The Jordan Times will not be published Tuesday, May 2, 1989, due to the Labour Day holiday on Monday. The next issue of the newspaper will appear Wednesday, May 3.

Senegal, Mauritania begin airlift or refugees

DAKAR (R) — An international fleet of planes Sunday evacuated thousands of Mauritanian and Senegalese refugees fleeing from bloody communal riots in both countries.

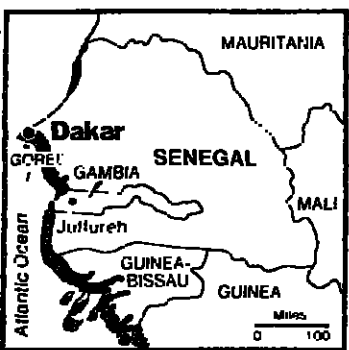
Calm returned to the Senegalese capital Dakar where youths rampaged Friday and Saturday killing at least 38 Mauritanians in revenge for the reported deaths of up to 440 Senegalese in neighbouring Mauritania.

The anti-Senegalese violence was itself in response to a week of looting of Mauritanian shops and homes in Dakar.

Mauritanian refugees clutching the few possessions they had managed to salvage shuffled onto planes from France, Morocco and Spain for the 500-kilometre flight to the Mauritanian capital Nouakchott.

The aircraft also brought back to Dakar some of the 7,000 Senegalese who had taken refuge in a mosque in Nouakchott. They fled into one end of Dakar's airport terminal as Mauritanians left from the other.

Army trucks ferried the refugees to the airport where two Hercules C-130 transporters and a Boeing 707 from Morocco, one Spanish plane and two French



Map showing the location of Senegal and Mauritania, with Dakar marked as the capital of Senegal.

transalls were waiting. Nouakchott, like Dakar under a night curfew, was also reported calm. Both states are former French colonies.

Youths defying a state of emergency had stormed through Dakar Saturday ransacking the few Mauritanian shops still intact. The death toll from the riots rose to 38, including two babies brought to one mortuary with smashed skulls.

Most victims were light-skinned moors of Arab and Berber descent. Most Senegalese are black.

The killings were sparked by the shooting of two Senegalese farmers in a dispute over grazing rights on the border between the two West African countries April

9. But underlying economic and racial tension between Senegalese and Mauritanians who dominate retail trade in Senegal also inflamed passions.

Senegalese President Abdou Diouf condemned what he called "the inhuman and degrading treatment" of Senegalese in Mauritania but he appealed for an end to vengeance.

"An attitude of vendetta would put at risk the lives of our fellow countrymen left in Mauritania," he said in a Saturday night broadcast.

About 30,000 Senegalese lived in Mauritania before the violence and 300,000 Mauritanians, mostly traders, were in Senegal. The two countries have close economic ties.

Diouf blamed Mauritania for the border incident and said he would welcome an international committee to investigate it.

The killings shocked officials and political commentators in Senegal, one of West Africa's few multi-party democracies.

"We shall always be brothers and neighbours even if the river Senegal (the border) is transformed into a river of blood," the semi-official Le Soleil newspaper said Saturday.

Settlers' attacks on the rise in W. Bank

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — A Jewish settler shot a 10-year-old Palestinian girl in the head Sunday during a stoning attack on his car, Arab reports said and two Israeli cabinet ministers demanded settlers be allowed to shoot more freely in clashes with Palestinians.

The reported shooting was the second of a Palestinian by a settler in three days, and the earlier victim died.

Doctors at Alia hospital said Arijia Naishe was seriously ill. Relatives who brought her to the hospital said she was not involved in stone-throwing.

Tension between Palestinians and settlers in the volatile city has been high since police Saturday arrested a Jew who confessed to shooting at Palestinians after his car was stoned in Hebron.

A 14-year-old boy standing 300 metres from where Haim Ben Lulu opened fire was shot and later died.

Ben Lulu, 52, claimed he only

fired after his car was stoned Friday and surrounded by 40 Palestinians who tried to turn it over, settlers said.

Clashes broke out elsewhere in Hebron Sunday between soldiers, police and Palestinians, residents reported.

Police who took Ben Lulu to re-enact the shooting had to turn back when youths hurled stones at them.

About 30 settlers held a vigil outside the military headquarters where Ben Lulu was held in protest at his arrest.

Shelli Karzen said Ben Lulu would have been killed had he not opened fire. "If (the army) is not going to protect us we are going to protect ourselves."

About 200 Jewish families live in the heart of Hebron among 80,000 Palestinians. Settlers in the city said this month they had set up a "self-defence force," using guard dogs and guns.

Last Monday Israelis rampaged through the city, smashing shop

and car windows, after their tour buses were stoned.

Elsewhere in the occupied West Bank, soldiers used tear-gas against Palestinian demonstrators, witnesses said.

In the occupied Gaza Strip, the army lifted curfews imposed for several days on the refugee camps and various districts of Gaza City. Protests broke out in Rafah border town and troops shot and wounded a Palestinian youth, hospital staff reported.

Israel's cabinet debated Sunday whether settlers should be allowed freer use of weapons. But Defence Minister Yitzhak Rabin said the settlers would not be allowed to take the law into their own hands.

Rabin also warned Palestinians the army would have to crack down harder on their uprising unless they accepted Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's offer of elections in the occupied territories as a step towards advancing the stalled peace process.

Beirut duels persist despite truce

BEIRUT (Agencies) — Shells struck residential areas near Beirut Sunday for the first time since an Arab League-mediated ceasefire went into effect at noon Friday.

Security sources said at least 10 shells hit eastern suburbs, relatively few compared with the fierce artillery duels which raged for nearly six weeks before the truce.

The ceasefire was earlier breached Saturday when at least 20 shells were fired at Amshet near the ancient town of Byblos, about 40 kilometres north of Beirut. Most landed in the sea.

At least two shells hit the sea-side Manara area in west Beirut Sunday and fighting also flared along the frontline at Souq Al Gharb southeast of Beirut for the first time since Friday.

Security sources said troops loyal to army commander Major-General Michel Aoun and leftist forces traded mortar and rocket-propelled grenades across a mountain ridge. There was no word on casualties.

The shelling provided some anxious moments for Beirutis who had ventured out in the warm spring weather for the first time in weeks of withering shell, mortar and rocket fire which has killed at least 280 people.

The battles broke out in mid-March after Aoun clamped a blockade on militia-run ports.

Militias, backed by Syrian troops, responded by laying siege to the Christian enclave and shelling ships heading to Christian-held ports.

Militias said they would observe the ceasefire only when Aoun lifted his blockade of their ports, which provide them with most of their supplies and income.

An Arab League delegation is expected Monday or Tuesday to arrange details of the deployment of an Arab observer force to



Two women in a squalid area of west Beirut near the greenline battlezone carry shopping bags filled with vegetables after a truce halted six weeks of battles Friday.

monitor the ceasefire.

The 312-man force under a Kuwaiti officer would deploy along the green line dividing east from west Beirut and monitor nearby mountain frontlines separating rival forces, sources close to the league in Tunis told Reuters.

Official sources said it was hoped the efforts of the league would break the impasse that has plunged Lebanon into its worst round of fighting in 14 years of civil war.

The Arab League called for an end to the sea blockade and the reopening of all crossing points linking the two sectors of the capital.

Civilians with special permits were allowed to pass through the museum crossing on the green

line on Sunday despite a decision by Aoun to open the crossing to all.

Arab League envoys hope to persuade the rival factions in Lebanon to permit the reopening of Beirut's air and sea outlets to the outside world which have been shut since the fighting.

Shelling, blockades and a fire at a main fuel depot led to electricity and water supplies being cut. But fuel from a French tanker last week has enabled power and water services to be restored for a few hours every day.

In Kuwait, Prime Minister Sheikh Saad Abdullah Al Sabah, whose foreign minister headed the six-member Arab League committee that worked out the ceasefire, said the warring parties should "allow the language of

dialogue logic and wisdom prevail to save the country from catastrophe."

Summit to tackle Lebanon

South Yemeni Foreign Minister Abdul Aziz Al Dali said in Cairo Sunday that talks at the next Arab summit will be dominated by the bloodshed in Lebanon.

"The situation in Lebanon is very dangerous," he said on arrival at Cairo airport to start a three-day official visit to Egypt, the first by a South Yemeni minister since Aden restored diplomatic ties last year.

Dali told reporters that all Arabs should back Arab League efforts to halt the killing there. Morocco's King Hassan has called for an Arab League summit to be held in Rabat either later this month or in June.

Moroccan Foreign Minister Abdul Latif Filali was in Kuwait Sunday to discuss the summit called by King Hassan, the Kuwaiti News Agency (KUNA) said.

KUNA earlier quoted Prime Minister Sheikh Saad as saying Kuwait would attend the summit, to be held on either May 20 or June 10, but was awaiting more details.

Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah returned to Kuwait late Saturday after attending an emergency Arab foreign ministers meeting in Tunis on Lebanon.



Cars are blocked on the motorway that leads to Dakar International Fair grounds, where more than 15,000 Mauritanians were sheltered Saturday.

U.N. runs out of food for Afghans

By Nassir Shirkhani
Reuter

KABUL — The United Nations Sunday distributed its last sacks of food to the starving people of Kabul as relief supplies dry up.

The last U.N. relief truck drew up in front of a family clinic in central Kabul, attracting a long line of veiled women.

But only the lucky ones received an allotment of 10 kilograms of flour and three kilograms of sugar to feed their malnourished children.

"How can I live now. My husband was killed in the war and I have to feed eight children," shouted an elderly lady.

Ross Mountain, chief of the U.N. Development Programme in Afghanistan, looked on in despair as disappointed women were herded away from the truck.

"We are looking for additional supplies from governments around the world. We hope to be able to resume this distribution," Mountain said.

The U.N. coordinator office for Afghanistan has parcelled out 237 tonnes of flour, wheat and sugar through the Operation Salam project since late March to 15,000 impoverished families.

"This is only a drop in the bucket as there are around 400,000 vulnerable people in Kabul alone," Mountain said.

The supplies are handed out in areas of the Afghan capital where up to 60 per cent of all children are malnourished.

Afghanistan has the highest child mortality rate in the world and 300 of every 1,000 children die before the age of five.

Ten years of war between the

Afghan government and an alliance of the Mujahideen guerrillas has wrought havoc, leading to widespread destruction and abandonment of agricultural land.

Mountain said the Salam project had only a few tonnes of supplies left which would be distributed outside the capital Tuesday.

Almost all the free handouts have been supplied by the Soviet Union. Moscow has promised to underwrite two thirds of an international aid programme of \$1 billion for Afghanistan.

But Mountain said that while the Soviet Union had flown in supplies only a small proportion of the promised aid had been delivered as it is averse to the Operation Salam controlling the distribution.

The disruption is also being largely blamed on the West's reluctance to be seen bailing out the embattled government of President Najibullah.

The only airlift of Western food arrived in Kabul on an Ethiopian plane in February.

East-West rivalry aside, the Mujahideen siege of urban centres has made the task of moving supplies to the cities extremely difficult.

There is a pile-up of 150,000 tonnes of essential supplies on the Soviet border but getting the food down to Kabul along the hazardous Salang Highway is an uphill

task with convoys having to run a gauntlet of the Mujahideen.

The Soviet Union has flown in a constant supply of food and military supplies to Kabul in a bid to help its ally beat severe shortages of essential commodities and continue the civil war against the rebels.

422 rebels surrender

The government said Saturday that 422 guerrillas had agreed to lay down their weapons and heed its call to end the fighting.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Mohammad Nabi Amani said the agreements with four rebel groups brought to 3,000 the number of rebels who have accepted a ceasefire and surrendered their arms.

Amani refused to disclose the names of the groups or individuals, citing confidentiality, but he said the number had accelerated since Feb. 15, when the Soviet Union pulled out the last of its troops from Afghanistan.

"We are expecting more in the future, maybe a major one very soon," Amani said.

The government has frequently said it has been talking with a number of rebel leaders. It recently reached agreement with a number of village leaders along the Salang Highway.

Terms of the agreement, known as the Salang protocols, were recorded on cassette tapes and sent to village and tribal leaders. It offered each village 90 tonnes of flour, 10 tonnes of vegetable oil, and 9,000 litres of diesel fuel on cash terms, provided that vehicles carrying the goods were allowed to travel on the road to the capital.



Waiting for bread ... Residents of Kabul struggle with one another to receive their daily allotment of bread from a backstreet baker in the city's market district

U.N. fully supports Arab effort in Lebanon

PARIS (R) — United Nations Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar said Saturday the U.N. Security Council was giving "maximum support" to Arab League efforts to end fighting in Lebanon.

Perez de Cuellar said after holding talks with French President Francois Mitterrand that it was essential to find a solution that allowed the Lebanese themselves to solve their problems.

"The permanent members of the Security Council and myself are trying to give maximum support to the Arab League's efforts, to help the league find overall solutions to the Lebanese problem," the U.N. chief told reporters.

He said he was willing to visit Lebanon or other Middle East capitals if the Arab League thought it would bolster the chances of a durable peace in Lebanon.

In Geneva earlier Saturday, Perez de Cuellar met Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah, who has negotiated a fragile ceasefire that Friday ended six weeks of fighting in Lebanon.

Perez de Cuellar said he briefed Mitterrand on the Arab League peace bid and thanked France for "showing the greatest interest in trying to solve the problem."

The Kuwaiti minister said after his meeting with the U.N. head that he had asked for U.N. help to secure a withdrawal of Israeli troops from its self-styled "security zone" in southern Lebanon.

In Tunis, sources close to the league said a Kuwaiti and an Algerian diplomat would visit Beirut early next week to arrange details of the deployment of an Arab observer force due to monitor the ceasefire.

Israel said negotiating PLO prisoner swap

TEL AVIV (R) — Israel has been indirectly negotiating with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) to exchange Palestinian prisoners for the body of an Israeli soldier, an Israeli Arab academic said Sunday.

Ahmed Tibi, who heads the Arab Academic Circle in Arab Jerusalem, said the United States and other third parties had been involved in reaching the settlement.

"I can say that something positive is happening in the direction of finishing this matter," Tibi told Reuters. "The issue of the soldier will be solved and Israel agreed to do something in return."

He refused to be more specific and would not say whether he was personally involved in the negotiations. "This is a matter

that was carried out over a long period," he said.

Israeli army spokesman Moshe Fogel refused to comment on the report. "I don't have anything to say," he said.

Israeli newspapers reported that the PLO would return an Israeli soldier, Samir Asad, captured and believed killed in Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon.

The PLO said Asad was killed during an Israeli air force attack on one of their bases in Lebanon.

Israel has in the past paid high prices to retrieve captured soldiers. In May 1985 it exchanged 1,150 Palestinians for three Israeli soldiers held by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC).

Fighter jets go on show at Baghdad fair

BAGHDAD (R) — French, Soviet and British military jets roared over Baghdad Saturday as plane-makers competed for Iraqi business at an international arms fair.

A French Mirage 2000 fighter and a Soviet MiG 29 combat aircraft staged a series of manoeuvres over the capital.

The MiG 29, in service with the Iraqi air force during the last year of the war with Iran, was flown by a young Iraqi pilot. It was the first time Baghdad had publicly acknowledged it possessed the aircraft.

A Sukhoi-25 fighter-bomber was also on display. A Soviet official said it was the first time it had taken part in an air show outside the Soviet Union.

Also on show were the French West German Alpha and the British Hawk-100 training jets, along with trainer planes and helicopters from six other countries.

Iraq is negotiating a deal for 50 Mirage 2000s and a similar number of Alpha jet trainers. It is also considering buying British Aerospace's Hawk.

Industry Minister Hussein Kamel Hassan said Thursday that Iraq was negotiating with the Soviet Union and France to build its own advanced jet.

He said it might also seek technology from British Aerospace or Dassault-Breguet/Dornier, makers of the Alpha, to design and make an aircraft at a plant near Mosul.

An Egyptian air force Alpha due to have taken part in the show was accidentally shot down by a anti-aircraft missile over Baghdad last week. The pilot and navigator parachuted to safety.

The air show is part of a five-day arms fair which opened Friday.

MIDDLE EAST NEWS IN BRIEF

PLO envoy escapes attack

SIDON (R) — The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) representative in Lebanon escaped an assassination attempt Saturday at a refugee camp near this southern port town, Palestinian sources said. They said a mortar was fired at dawn at Zeid Wehbe's bedroom in his house in the Mich Mich refugee camp. He was not there. The bomb wounded three civilians living nearby.

Israel starts daylight savings time

TEL AVIV (AP) — The clocks in Israel moved ahead by one hour at midnight Saturday to begin a period of daylight savings time. The daylight savings time will continue until Sept. 2, 1989, and during that period Israel will be three hours ahead of Greenwich Mean time, the ministry said. According to experts, Israel will thus save some \$8 million due to the expected reduction in electricity consumption.

Inquiry held into Saudi-British deal

LONDON (AP) — An official inquiry is examining allegations that commission payments inflated the export price of Britain's £15 billion (\$25 million) sale of Tornado fighter-bombers to Saudi Arabia, new reports said Sunday. The National Audit Office said Saturday night it was investigating the circumstances surrounding Britain's biggest-ever arms deal in 1985, but declined to elaborate. The Observer, a respected weekly, alleged last month that the export sale price had been inflated by commission payments made to agents of British Aerospace to "sweeten" arms sales.

Iran reports big drug seizures

NICOSIA (R) — Iranian police and revolutionary committees seized a total of 253 kilograms of opium and arrested 13 traffickers in several cities this week, the Iranian news agency reported Saturday. Iran has hanged 448 alleged traffickers and seized tonnes of narcotics during a crackdown which began in January.

Butterflies invade Iranian town

NICOSIA (R) — Thousands of brown butterflies have invaded the Iranian town of Dargaz near the Soviet border, the Iranian news agency said Saturday. The swarms cut visibility making driving difficult and caused headaches for road cleaners forced to sweep up the bodies each morning. IRNA, received in Nicosia, said. Iranian television said the origin of the butterfly plague was a mystery. Some experts blamed it on the dry spring weather.

Israeli major jailed over exemption

TEL AVIV (R) — An Israeli major who took bribes to exempt soldiers from military service has been jailed for eight years and stripped of his rank, a military spokeswoman said Sunday. Zvi Marabani, 34, an officer in the medical corps, was also given a dishonourable discharge after pleading guilty to 52 charges, mostly of bribery, in a military court Friday. Israel was scandalised when news broke last September of a racket in which reserve and regular soldiers received bogus medical exemptions from military service. The spokeswoman described the eight-year prison sentence as very severe, usually reserved for such crimes as murder. She also noted that demotion was a rare measure generally imposed in cases like espionage or involvement with drugs.

Iranian president to visit Pyongyang

NICOSIA (AP) — Iranian President Ali Khamenei will visit North Korea next month on his way home from an official visit to China, the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) reported Sunday. The agency said Khamenei's May 14 state visit to the capital, Pyongyang, will take place at the invitation of North Korean President Kim Il-Sung. North Korea was one of a handful of countries that supplied arms to Iran during the eight-year war with Iraq when a Western arms embargo was applied against Tehran.

Shamir, Arens agree to drop Sharansky

TEL AVIV (R) — Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir and Foreign Minister Moshe Arens have decided to drop former Soviet dissident Natan Sharansky as their candidate to be Israel's next U.N. ambassador, Israeli Television said Sunday. It said the two leaders from the right-wing Likud Party made the decision because of opposition to Sharansky's nomination from the Labour Party. Political sources have said Labour Party leader and Vice Premier Shimon Peres opposed Sharansky's appointment, saying it would antagonise the Soviet Union at a time when Israel wants better relations.

Badr defends detentions

CAIRO (R) — Interior Minister Zaki Badr Saturday defended the detention of more than 1,500 Muslim fundamentalists following clashes with police and said any Egyptian who tried to stir up unrest would be arrested. "I will firmly crush any attempts to attack the government in order to achieve security and stability," Badr told a group of new graduates from the police academy. "I will not hesitate to arrest any citizen who may try to foment trouble in the country." More than 1,500 suspected Muslim militants have been arrested in the three weeks following violent disturbances on April 7 at the oasis of Fayoum, southwest of Cairo.

SLA militiaman wounded by mine

METULLAH (R) — A militiaman in the Israeli-backed South Lebanon Army (SLA) was wounded Sunday when his tank hit a landmine in South Lebanon, military sources said. The mine was planted in the central region of Israel's self-declared "security zone" north of its border. The soldier was treated at hospital in Marjayoun in the zone, the sources said.

Sudan rebels agree to open-ended 'period of tranquility'

By Rory Channing
Reuter

NAIROBI — The U.N. operation "Lifeline Sudan" has won clearance from southern-based rebels to ferry food aid through guerrilla-held areas for as long as it is needed, according to the U.N. officials.

The leader of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), John Garang, had told United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Director James Grant he was prepared to observe an indefinite cessation of hostilities to allow aid to move through rebel-controlled areas, a UNICEF spokesman said.

"Colonel Garang has said it

(the so-called period of 'tranquility') is open-ended," spokesman Carlton James said.

The operation was launched April 1 after the SPLA agreed to a "month of tranquility" to allow emergency food supplies to reach southern Sudan. The south has been the focus of the SPLA's six-year war against what the rebels call domination of the region by the north.

Grant said in early April that the SPLA might extend the deadline to enable the U.N. to try to rush in 100,000 tonnes of emergency food aid before rains, which were expected to set in during May and which could render roads and airstrips unusable.

But it was never clear just how flexible Garang was on a deal described by the UNICEF director as a "near miracle."

James said Garang told Grant: "Every child in Sudan is one of ours. As long as there is a need for humanitarian aid, we will facilitate (movement)."

Garang and Grant last met Sunday at Kongor, 250 kilometres north of the southern Sudanese town of Juba.

Grant, on returning from his visit to Sudan, said that hunger there could still claim 100,000 lives this year. An estimated 250,000 died of famine in 1988.

"Corridors of peace" The SPLA and government

forces agreed to the cessation of hostilities in order to allow food to be sent in via train, road, barge and airlift "corridors of peace," which include supply routes from Sudan's southern neighbours Kenya and Uganda.

The U.N. also wants to send food into Sudan from Ethiopia, but has been refused permission, however, negotiations with Addis Ababa were still under way, James said.

Paul Mitchell, spokesman for the U.N. World Food Programme (WFP), said "Lifeline Sudan" envisaged 194,464 tonnes of food aid would be needed for the whole year by

Sudan. Six-tenths of this is needed in government-controlled areas.

It is hoped to deliver 108,730 tonnes to both government and rebel-controlled areas in the four months to June 30. One-quarter of this is still to be reached by its destination by the end of this month.

Relief operations were marred by an ambush by unidentified gunmen in southern Sudan of the first truck convoy from Kenya last week when eight people were killed. The operations are now under way in all affected areas but the Upper Nile.

One convoy from Kenya has

got through since the first was forced to turn back, and two others carrying 375 tonnes of food between them are on their way. A convoy from Kampala reached Sudan's southern town of Torit Thursday with 850 tonnes of maize, after offloading 250 tonnes at Nimule and Pagri.

Twenty planes, mostly Hercules and C-160 Transall aircraft, are flying food aid missions from Khartoum and centres like Entebbe, Uganda, where the WFP and the International Committee of the Red Cross has eight planes supplying towns like Juba and Torit.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 77111-19

PROGRAMME ONE

15:30 Koran
15:40 Programme review
15:45 Children programmes
16:00 Children of the World
16:05 News summary in Arabic
16:10 World News
16:15 Arabic series
16:20 Local programme
16:25 Programme review
16:30 News in Arabic
16:35 Arabic series
16:40 Programme review
16:45 Monday Show
16:50 Variety Show
16:55 News summary in Arabic
17:00 Variety show (cont.)

PROGRAMME TWO

18:00 Documentary
18:05 News in French
18:10 Weekly Sport magazine
18:15 News in Hebrew
18:20 Varieties
18:25 Kate and Allie
18:30 Thirty Something
18:35 News in English
18:40 Jack and Mike

PRAYER TIMES

03:21 Fair
04:46 (Sunrise) Dhufu
11:33 Dhufu
15:12 'Asr

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swifich Tel. 810740
Assassins of God Church, Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terrasanta Church Tel. 622366
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541
Anglican Church Tel. 625383, Tel. 628543
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751
Armenian International Church Tel. 685326
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 811395
Rahmaw Congregation Tel. 822605
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 815817, 821254

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.
A gradual drop in temperatures will occur and it will be partly cloudy with a

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

possibility of scattered showers in eastern areas. Winds will be northwesterly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and sea calm.	Yacoub pharmacy 644945 Shmeisani pharmacy 637660	(directory assistance) 12 Overseas Call 17 Central Amman Telephone 623101 Repairs 623101 Abdallah Telephone Repairs 661101 Jordan Television 773111 Radio Jordan 771111 Water Authority 680100 Jordan Electricity Authority 815615 Electric Power Company 636381 RJ Flight Information 06-53300 Queen Alia Intl. Airport 06-53300	AMMAN: Dr. Abdul Hadi Toyem 620115 Dr. Awwad Musa Al Haj 771020 Dr. Jamil Mahmud Al Zil 794149 Dr. Ahmad Al Nator 653934 Firas pharmacy 661912 Ferdous pharmacy 778336 Al Asana pharmacy 637655 Nabouh pharmacy 623672 Al Salam pharmacy 636730	Civil Defence Department 661111 Civil Defence Immediate 630341 Rescue Police 192, 02111, 637777 Fire Brigade 62300093 Blood Bank 775121 Highway Police 843402 Traffic Police 65639091 Public Security Department 650000 / 685111 Complaints 605800 Hotel Complaints 661176 Water and Sewerage Complaints 897467 Amman Municipality 787111 Telephone Information	AMMAN: Hussein Medical Centre 81381322 Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn. 642816 Aklich Maternity, J. Amn. 642412 Jabal Amman Maternity 643642 Malhas, J. Amman 636140 Palestine, Shmeisani 6641714 Shmeisani Hospital 699131 University Hospital 843845 Al-Musabir Hospital 6622719 The Islamic, Abdali 6641646 Itahia, Al-Muhajreen 7771013 Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh 77511126 Army, Marfa 89161015 Queen Alia Hospital 60224050	Amal Hospital 674155 ZARQA: Zarqa Gov. Hospital (09)983323 Zarqa National Hospital (09)991071 Jbn Sina Hospital (09)960752 IBBID: Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555 Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272275 Ibn Al Nafies Hospital (02)247100 AQABA: Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111	FOR THE TRAVELLER QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (06)53300-5, where it should always be verified. ARRIVALS Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1) 09:10 Aqaba (RJ) 09:16 Damascus (RJ) 09:30 Cairo (RJ)
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Other Flights (Terminal 2)

09:10 Sana'a (RJ)
09:40 Kuwait (RJ)
09:45 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:15 Larnaca (RJ)
10:30 Cairo (RJ)
10:45 Casablanca, Tunis (RJ)
10:50 Bangkok (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 1)

09:10 Sana'a (RJ)
09:15 Cairo (RJ)
09:20 Damascus (RJ)
09:40 Baghdad (RJ)
10:15 Bahrain (RJ)
10:30 Kuwait (RJ)
10:45 Paris (RJ)
10:50 Baghdad (RJ)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)
06:55 Aqaba (RJ)
07:00 London (RJ)
11:45 Vienna, Chicago, Los Angeles (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

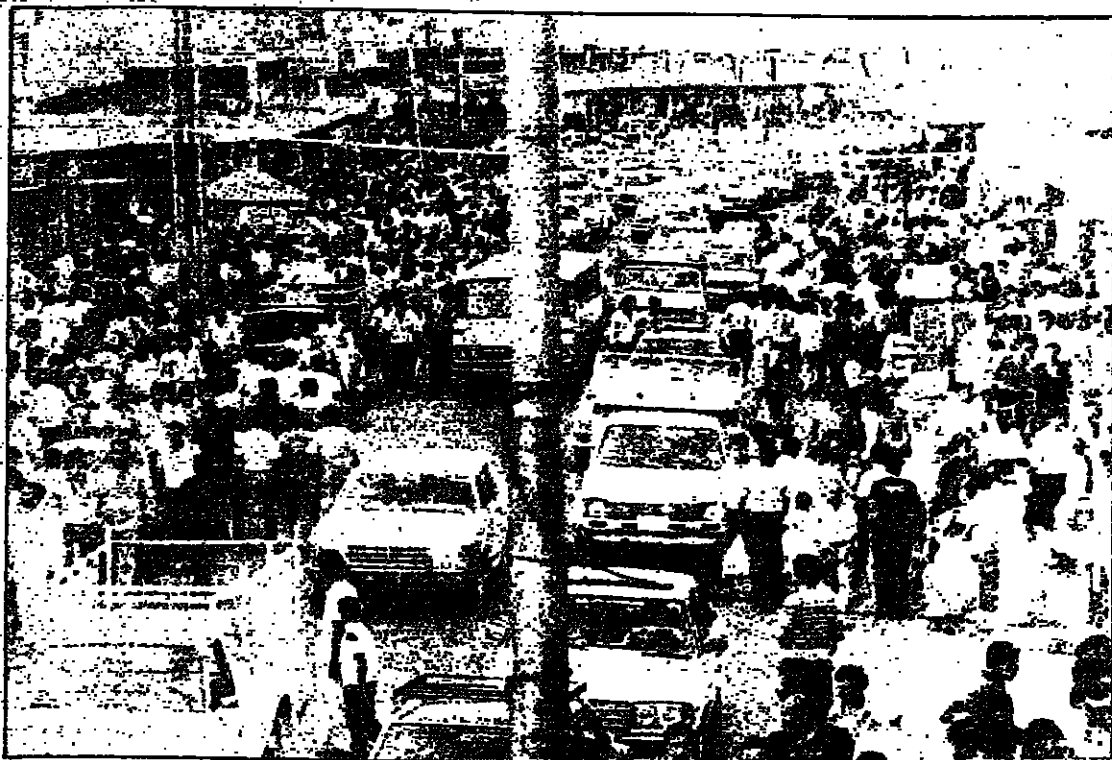
12:15 Frankfurt, Copenhagen (RJ)
12:30 Cairo (RJ)
12:40 Jeddah (RJ)
12:50 Kuwait, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
13:00 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
13:10 Baghdad (RJ)
13:20 Cairo (RJ)
13:30 Dubai, Muscat (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

06:30 Cairo, London (RJ)

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in Bs per kg	
Almond	600/500
Apple	300/200
Banana	300/200
Banana (Mekanshi)	300/200
Beans	240/180
Broad beans	80/50
Cabbage	70/30
Carrot	140/100
Cauliflower	120/100
Cucumbers	200/150
Dates	200/150
Eggplant	170/120
Garlic	240/200
Lemon	200/150
Lettuce	60/080
Marrow (large)	120/80
Marrow (small)	120/80
Orange	300/200
Onion (dry)	50/40
Onion (green)	100/80
Pea	150/100
Pepper (hot)	150/100
Pepper (sweet)	200/150
Potato	200/150
Sunberry	1500/1000
Tomato	150/100



Downtown Amman is always congested with people and traffic. RSS researchers found out that during winter the cold weather forces a blanket of polluted air to sit on that part of the city.

How fresh is the air?

By Ghadeer Taher
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Heavy traffic, difficult parking, blaring horns, thick crowds, unwelcome hands and narrow sidewalks clustered with street vendors are not the only hazards facing people in the commercial nerve centre of the capital: pollution levels at certain times of the year exceed internationally accepted standards, and pose potential health hazards.

While the situation in Amman is not in any way different from other major cities in the region or elsewhere in the Third World, serious efforts to identify and address the pollution problem here have been exerted, but only recently. A detailed report on the situation is expected to be released at the end of 1989, when analysis of data collected over the past three years will provide a clear picture of whether there is any serious dangers lurking in the air over downtown Amman.

A recent addition to the monitoring process, launched in 1986 by the Royal Scientific Society (RSS), is equipment designed to gauge the ozone content at human breathing level in downtown, according to the head of the RSS's environmental studies division, Aiman Al Hasan. Prior to the addition, the focus of the process had been on other major pollutants — sulphur dioxide, carbon dioxide, nitrogen oxides and suspended particulates.

Ozone, a byproduct of the chemical interaction between reactive hydrocarbons and nitric oxides in sunlight, causes acute irritation of the eye, nose, throat and chest, according to studies conducted in Europe and elsewhere. It could also affect vegetation, textiles and rubber products.

"Some people were confused that we are monitoring the ozone layer," which provides a protective shield for the earth's atmosphere, said Hasan in an interview with the Jordan Times. "We are simply monitoring the ozone level at the surface — the breathing zone of human beings."

The RSS environment monitoring system, launched with

assistance from Canada's International Research Centre, now employs four fixed stations and one mobile unit. Data collected from the stations are regularly fed into computers for analysis "to determine a trend, a pattern in atmospheric pollutants," Hasan said.

Contributing factors

The topographical features of downtown Amman — the hills surrounding the capital — heavy traffic, poor vehicle maintenance and domestic and commercial heating systems contribute to the seasonal high levels of air pollution recorded by the RSS, Hasan said.

"High levels of pollutants were recorded in the downtown area compared with other locations such as Jabal Nasser," he said. "We have observed that during the cold months of the year elevated levels were recorded. What is a little bit alarming is that these episodes of various air pollutants do occur simultaneously which could cause adverse synergic health effects if these levels persist for a long period of time."

The longer the period of exposure, the greater the chance of adverse effects, especially on vulnerable sectors of the population — the elderly, children and people with respiratory ailments — according to Hasan.

"From the viewpoint of health, what is really alarming about dust particles are the smaller particles which are in the range of up to seven microns," he said. With such a high concentration of dust levels in Amman, in certain cases the dust can carry within itself certain hazardous material including heavy metals such as lead, mercury and arsenic.

These pollutants have been known to affect the respiratory tract, the central nervous system and the brain. No medical cases have been identified as such in Jordan yet, but then there has not been any systematic effort to trace the origins of any ailment to air pollution in the Kingdom, according to doctors.

While there is no universal remedy to air pollution in any form without having effects on national economy and industry,

regular vehicle checks, a solution to frequent traffic congestion and proper zoning laws to regulate the location of industrial plants emitting hazardous materials into the air are recommended as ways to minimise the level of pollutants in the "breathing zone."

Parallel efforts

The Department of Environment at the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment is also engaged in monitoring the environment, but at present its focus is on water pollutants. Ramzi Batayneh, an engineer who works at the department, said discussions were ongoing between Jordan and Sweden on setting up an air pollutant monitoring unit at the ministry.

According to Batayneh, the project will focus on the Zarqa area to monitor the levels of hydrocarbons, sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxide. In a telephone interview with the Jordan Times, Batayneh pointed out that Zarqa houses the Al Hussein Thermal Power Station, the Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company and Kirbet Al Samra water-treatment plant in addition to a large number of small and medium-size industries which emit air pollutants.

Also involved in the monitoring system is the Health Ministry's department of occupational health and environment. The department measures air pressure at random in various parts of the country. The ministry does not have fixed stations monitoring air pollution.

"We only have a station which measures air pressure. We do not have any results about air pollution levels in Amman since we only began monitoring four or five months ago," Dr. Adnan Al Rashdan, an official at the ministry, told the Jordan Times in a telephone interview. "What we do now is take random samples." The ministry's activities at this point in time, however, can only be seen as of little contribution to the national effort since a regular and systematic pollution monitoring programme does not exist, said a well-informed source connected with the ministry.

NATIONAL NEWS BRIEFS

CONDOLENCES: His Majesty King Hussein Sunday delegated his advisor for tribal affairs Sharif Fawwaz Abdullah who is also commander of the badia and border police to convey his condolences to Al Jazi family over the death of the late Sheikh Mohammad Hamad Al Jazi (Petra).

TRAINING COURSES: The Ministry of Social Development's women department will hold twelve training course for Jordanian housewives during this year. The courses are aimed at integrating Jordanian women in development through enabling them to acquire new skills and knowledge to meet their basic needs and to increase household income (Petra).

COURSE CONCLUDES: A training course for 27 English language teachers from Irbid Governorate, organised by the Yarmouk University's continuous learning and community service department, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Noor Hussein Foundation, concluded in Irbid Sunday.

EDITORS: The term of the University of Jordan's cultural magazine editorial board has been renewed for a further period of two years, according to a decision taken by the University President Dr. Abdul Salam Al Majali. The editorial board groups Khalid Karaki as editor, Hammam Ghassib, Ibrahim Nasser, Bashir Abdul Hadi and Abdullah Oweidat as members (J.T.).

APPOINTED: The Cabinet has endorsed the appointment of Yassin Abdul Qader Al Shamleh as mayor of Shihabieh town (Petra).

MUNICIPAL BUDGET: Minister of rural affairs and environment endorsed a JD 160,000 budget of Bassira municipality for the current year. The minister said that in the second leg of this year, work will start on the constructing of a building to house government departments, a slaughter house and a municipality building (Petra).

PALM GIFT: The Aqaba Region Authority Sunday received 600 improved palm trees as a gift from a Kuwait palm tree company. The trees are to be planted in the palm tree forest in Aqaba city as a contribution from Kuwait in support of the agricultural sector in Jordan (Petra).

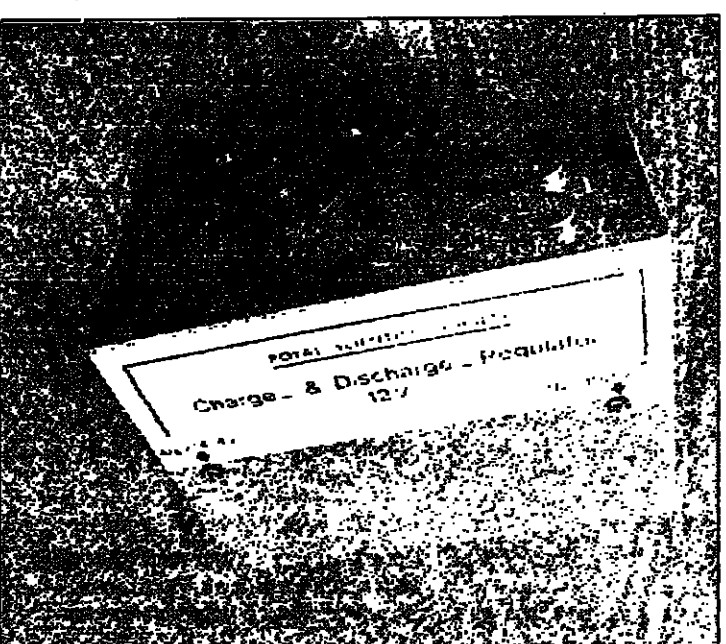
Naour projects discussed

MADABA (Petra) — Naour sub-district development units Sunday discussed the most important projects to be carried out in the district in light of their available resources.

At a meeting Sunday, Naour sub-district governor, recalled the recommendations made by the National Development Council and decided to make contacts with the ministries of agriculture and tourism to seek their approval on some related projects in the district.

He also said the council recommended that the development units in the sub-district contact the Jordan Cooperative Organisation for the purpose of setting up a multi-purpose agricultural cooperative to contribute to supporting the agricultural sector, and a dairy factory.

He further said that the council has recommended that Naour sub-district set up a multi-purpose craft centre for women and called on the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment to expedite work on final plans for a number of residential areas. The sub-district governor also discussed with heads of village councils issues pertaining to forming a joint service council to carry out a number of development and production projects benefiting the largest sector of people in the area.



CURRENT REGULATOR: The research and development division at the Royal Scientific Society's (RSS) electronic services and training centre has designed and produced a battery charge and discharge regulator (above). The regulator controls the charging current supplied by solar panels to storage batteries and also protects the storage batteries from overcharging or deep discharging by loads (water pumps and light bulbs). The control unit has been tested by the RSS's solar research centre and was found to be functioning well. This unit is the fruit of cooperation between the RSS electronic services and training centre on the one hand and the solar research centre on the other.

Jordan observes Labour Day

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan, along with the rest of the world, Monday celebrates International Labour Day. The Ministry of Labour will mark the occasion with celebrations at the Hussein Sports City Monday evening during which the Minister of Labour Dr. Jamal Al Bdour and Mr. Samer Qardan, secretary general of the Labour Union Federation in Jordan will deliver two speeches about the achievements of the Jordanian work force. The celebrations will also include an iftar party for the heads of the workers unions and members of the federation's executive bodies.

Ministry of Labour secretary general Dr. Saleh Al Khasawneh Sunday offered congratulations to Jordanian workers and to the worker's movement in various sectors of the country for their positive contribution to the development of Jordan.

In a statement carried by the Jordan News Agency, Petra, Khasawneh said Labour Day celebrations are considered a tribute to

workers and productive individuals and an appreciation for their efforts in building and developing the Kingdom, a country which has witnessed development became part of its daily life, distinguished among the rest of the countries of the world for seeking a better life for its people.

He reiterated His Majesty King Hussein's famous words... "Man is our most precious asset," and said humans are "our resources, goals and means of achieving comprehensive development."

Our workers, he said, are a source of pride for the country because of their experiences, moral conduct and appreciation of duty and responsibility as well as loyalty.

That, he said, came as a result of the character of the working sector with all its characteristics of caring for the welfare and wellbeing of its workers at all levels and in both the private and public sectors.

He added that the workers and employers were an example of a

good citizen aware of his responsibilities and his duties on bases of complete coordination of efforts in team spirit. This has enabled Jordan to accomplish its developmental goals in education, the economy, health, housing, labour, in addition to its social dimension — all in the framework of balanced and stable working relations between the two sides of production process.

In his speech, the Secretary General pointed out that Jordan has faced all this with complete care for the labour movement, production and labour affairs. Jordan has modernised and developed the labour legislations and has organised the labour and employment market. It has also provided vocational training, ensured labourers safety, health, education, social security and industrial relations.

This has created adequate circumstances that enabled the labour sector to perform its role in the best possible manner.

Lawzi urges agriculture heads to implement King's directives

AMMAN (Petra) — Ministry of Agriculture Secretary General Saleh Al Lawzi Sunday called on all department heads and agricultural project directors to draw up practical proposals for the coming stage, through studying and evaluating the agricultural programmes and projects, being carried out now in various parts of the Kingdom.

At a meeting held Sunday, Lawzi stressed that the Royal directives contained in the Royal letter of appointment King Hussein addressed to the new government, have charted the road for the agricultural sector during the next stage and have defined priorities to be adopted, particularly in the fields of preventing soil erosion, development of Zarqa River basin and development of highland.

Among the priority projects are also the cropping pattern sys-

tem, which should be reconsidered following Jordan's achievements of self-sufficiency in a number of agricultural products, and putting an end to the construction work in arable land.

Lawzi emphasised the need for drawing up a new policy for producing saplings of fruit bearing trees of good quality and called for giving the private sector its full role in this respect.

participation of every official, and called for focussing on practical values and good performance.

He also called on the department directors to propose the best means they deem fit for upgrading performance levels. Directors of WAJ and JVA stressed that their two respective authorities were ready and willing to operate as one team.

At a meeting attended by the various water department directors, in addition to directors of the Jordan Valley Authority and Water Authority of Jordan, Keilani said that serious and meaningful work requires the

Jordan, Morocco agree on host of economic issues

AMMAN (J.T.) — The official gazette has carried the minutes of the third meeting of the Jordanian-Moroccan Joint Committee signed in Amman on March 25, 1989. According to the Arabic daily Al Dustour, the talks provide for equal contribution to trade exchange between the two countries for 1989 in the range of \$40 million worth of goods exempt from customs duties.

The minutes provide for the exchange of all the national products provided that such goods be accompanied by certificates of origin. The minutes also provide for holding two trade exhibitions in both countries in 1989. Each exhibition will be allowed to sell goods worth up to \$4 million to

the public.

Each exhibition will also be exempt from customs duties as well as administrative and monetary restrictions. Direct sales to the public and to wholesale merchants or importers from both countries will be permitted. Moreover, all commodities on sale will be exempted from all administrative and monetary restrictions.

At the conclusion of the trade exhibitions, a three-month period will be given for the promotion of products that were not sold.

The minutes of the meeting also recommended the issuance of import licences in both countries during a period not exceeding one week from the time the

application is submitted. This excludes all subsidised commodities or those whose import is banned.

They also include exchanges of visits by trade and commercial delegations as well as representatives of chambers of commerce and industry so that all facilities are made to ensure the success of these visits particularly with regard to issuance of entry visas.

The Moroccan delegation proposed holding a joint Moroccan-Jordanian exhibition. The Jordanian side welcomed the idea provided that this exhibition be held at the same time of the proposed Jordanian industries exhibition in Muscat in February 1990.

The Jordanian side, on his part, proposed acquiring Moroccan experience in the export of agricultural products to European countries. The Moroccan side welcomed the idea and expressed readiness to hold a seminar in Amman in this regard.

The two sides also agreed to convene a meeting by the customs directors in both countries within three months from the signing of these minutes so as to study matters related to customs in both countries and present a report over this to the joint Moroccan-Jordanian committee during its next meeting.

The two sides also agreed to convene a meeting in 1989 to be attended by representatives of the industrial sector in both countries in order to study means of establishing and coordinating mutual industrial concerns.

The two sides also expressed satisfaction with the coordination existing between the two phosphate companies in the two countries. The committee called on the Arab companies, which welcomed the establishment of a joint company between Morocco and Jordan, to study all steps related to making that company a reality.

The Moroccan side also welcomed the Jordanian proposal to invite the common tourist committee to implement a tourist agreement signed between the two countries. The two sides also agreed to have science and research institutions in both countries exchange information, hold mutual training courses, and define the steps necessary to conduct joint projects. The two sides also agreed to hold their next meeting in Rabat in 1990.

Jordan presses hepatitis battle

By Hind-Lara Mango
Special to the Jordan Times

ALTHOUGH hepatitis B is seldom heard of in Jordan, the disease is one of the most serious and common infections with disastrous consequences that include cirrhosis and liver cancer. In Jordan, viral induced liver diseases are far more frequent than in many other countries of the world. "People coming from poor

socio-economic status are most likely to be infected by this virus," said Dr. Ala' Toukan, an authority in this field.

Hepatitis B is a major health hazard and usually affects people between 30 to 50 years of age, and can cause death.

Statistics based on local medical statistics indicate that 10 per cent of the population in Jordan are carriers of hepatitis B virus.

Dr. Toukan says: "Jordan is an endemic area and everybody is a

potential target, particularly children during their first four years of life. They are highly susceptible to it; the earlier the age of infection, the more likely they are to carry this virus for the rest of their lives. Liver cirrhosis and cancer may be late consequences of this carriage."

In South East Asia a child usually contracts the infection through his mother at birth. That is why hepatitis-B vaccine, which has been in the market now for four years, is given at birth. In Jordan, however, the formulated policy is to give the child the vaccine after birth with the childhood vaccinations starting at three months.

Hepatitis B can be transmitted in several ways. Although not as deadly, hepatitis B, like the acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) disease, may be contracted via intravenous transmission such as in drug addicts who use each other's needles; sexual transmission especially amongst homosexuals is another way of acquiring the virus. These, however, are not the common ways in which the virus is transmitted in Jordan. Rather it is contracted through close contact with infected people, especially family members. Bedding together, using each other's towels and tooth brushes, and prolonged intimate contact help to spread of the virus.

Dr. Toukan explained that the majority of the population get infected by the time they are 60. They could recover and become

immune; however, an important minority become carriers, thus forming the reservoir for future spread.

This disease is a heavy economic burden on the country, for it prevents an individual from working and being productive, the average age of death associated with this disease is 40 years. At the same time hospitalisation is very costly.

"Analysis shows that mass vaccination programmes may be extremely economical to a country. A single vaccine course costs \$15-\$20 per person," says Dr. Toukan.

In Jordan, The Friends of the Liver Patients Society extend financial supports to patients in need of the treatment and vaccine. It pays for the expenses incurred by poor patients visiting hospitals.

In view of its price and relative unavailability (of the vaccine), those most exposed to the disease, namely the immediate relatives, will be vaccinated," said Saheer Asfour, president of the Society of the Friends of Liver Patients. She explains:

"Over the past four years, Jordanians belonging to the society have dedicated themselves to helping in whatever way they can; for instance, we have supported physicians in conducting research on hepatitis B. They have concentrated their research on transmission of the disease in poor rural communities, and to assess the problem of maternal to newborn transmission in this country.



Her Highness Princess Taphreed opens a bazaar organised by the Friends of the Liver Patients Society for the benefit of liver patients. Next to the

Princess is Saheer Asfour, the society's president (file photo).

Another aspect under study is the way to ensure that health care personnel do not transmit the virus to patients."

Educational programmes are usually organised in conjunction with government and independent agencies such as the United Nations Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA). The aim is to make the public, teachers in particular, aware of the problem and the importance of hygiene in avoiding infection.

campaign, representatives from the society have been lecturing mothers and students on hepatitis B. The areas covered include refugee camps and rural villages.

Treasurer, Mary Hanna says: "In order to fulfill our aims we must have a steady income. Unfortunately financial contributions from the public are limited. We face many problems when it comes to buying vaccines as it is very expensive. Nevertheless, we offer free vaccination to poor people, and the most prone to

infection. In addition, the research projects presently supported by our society have to be funded by contributions."

Towards these objectives, and to help buy these costly vaccines in particular, the society holds annual charity exhibitions which have contributed a great deal towards this end.

Contributions are a means of helping the Society of the Friends of Liver Patients to achieve their goals.

WHAT'S GOING ON

The following listings are compiled from monthly bulletins and the daily Arabic press. Readers are advised to verify the listed time and place with the concerned institutions.

EXHIBITIONS

- ★ An exhibition of book and handicrafts at Princess Alia College.
- ★ A plastic art exhibition by Mohammad Bolis and Munira Tunisyyeh at the Housing Gallery.
- ★ An exhibition entitled "The Tuebingen Atlas of the Middle East" at the Goethe Institute.

RAMADAN SOUQ

- ★ Ramadan open-air market, which includes foodstuff, clothes, home appliances and children's toys at Mahatta, eastern Amman.
- ★ International Ramadan Souq, in which 14 Arab and Islamic countries are taking part, at the International Auto Centre, Queen Alia International Airport Highway.

FOLKLORE

- ★ Performances by folk groups depicting traditional songs and dances at the Roman Amphitheatre down town Amman after iftar.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation
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May 1 — an occasion to take stock

MAY 1 of every year marks the day when the whole world commemorates Labour Day in honour of and in tribute to the contributions of workers all over the globe to the development of their respective countries. It is in recognition of the sweat and blood of workers who man the factories, offices and farms which produce and offer the most essential commodities and services of their societies that the international community has decided to dedicate this day of every year. In a sense, the celebration of this day is the society's way of expressing its gratitude to all those who assist it on a daily basis to carry on with life and its needs. Yet, the best way to express man's appreciation and gratitude to fellow women and men who make up the labour force of his country is to help them enjoy their just rights as spelled out in the domestic and international laws. In this context, Jordanian workers are blessed with legislations which go a long way to assure them their rights. This is not to suggest that all is perfect in Jordanian legislations on labour and that there is no more need to fill the gaps and rectify the existing shortcomings. Like most countries endeavouring to fulfil their treaty obligations to labourers, Jordan has gone a long way on the road to satisfy the legitimate and reasonable needs and rights of Jordanian workers. Nevertheless, May 1 of this and every year serves as yet another occasion to take stock of what great work has already been done to accord Jordanian workers protection and what has yet to be done to finish the work in that direction. To be sure, all such efforts must be conducted with a full view of the realities of the Jordanian economy. It so happens that the country is going through difficult economic times and such unusual circumstances require that all Jordanians, including workers, pitch in to help heal the economic wounds of the country by also sharing in the sacrifices that the country has to endure. Such sacrifices that all Jordanians are called upon to offer must not be made at the cost of basic needs of the workers. Thus, in view of the conflicting demands made on the country, this May 1 will stand out as a special occasion to help the workers make their ends meet till better times arrive while calling on them in turn to help their country also make ends meet.

JORDAN PRESS EDITORIALS

The three Arabic dailies Al Ra'i, Al Dustour and Sawt Al Shaab Sunday stressed the need for adhering to the principles, as spelled out in the letter of appointment that His Majesty King Hussein addressed to the government of Prime Minister Sharif Zaid Ibn Shaker. Al Ra'i said the translation of such principles in to plans of action is not the sole responsibility of the government but the joint responsibility of the whole Jordanian family. The paper also noted that supporting the national unity is as well the responsibility of whole Jordanian family which should also promote a quiet dialogue, a dialogue that respects the opinion and the counter opinion of others and avoids futile arguments. The newspaper noted that King Hussein has stressed the need for adherence to integrity because it helps us make the right assessment of our situation and to identify positive and negative aspects in our life, without any exaggeration. Needless to mention that safeguarding public funds is the joint responsibility of the whole Jordanian community, this means that the Jordanian citizen, irrespective of whether he or she is a public servant or working for his own should safeguard public property, do his duties towards the country and improve his social and professional performance in a manner capable of avoiding waste of funds, the newspaper noted.

Al Dustour said that safeguarding the national unity is on top of the priorities of this stage, and that is why Prime Minister Sharif Zaid Ibn Shaker has requested all cabinet ministers in the first session held Friday to work out executive programmes, capable of serving the national interests and safeguarding the national unity. The prime minister's call for opening up channels of communication and quiet dialogue with all Jordanians from all walks of life did not come haphazardly, because he believes that dialogue is one of the most important means for advancing the march of our country and strengthening national awareness and joint responsibility. The economic adjustment phase ahead of Jordan warrants that people be made aware of how to face the difficult circumstances within the framework of an innovative dialogue and interaction between citizens and officials. The paper noted that as long as the call for opening up channels of constructive dialogue constitute one of the most important features of the coming stage, the focus on enhancing the values of integrity and combating corruption and economic crimes should also constitute another important aspect of the next stage, given the fact that the letter of appointment of the new government has stressed the need for highlighting integrity values.

Sawt Al Shaab said that the seriousness which characterised first cabinet session held under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Sharif Zaid is worth appreciation, because it touched upon spots that need to be dealt with in a hurry. The new government's concentration on opening up channels of dialogue between citizens and government officials contribute to increasing public awareness and promoting joint responsibility in a manner capable of enabling us to counter the difficult economic situations we are now passing through. This point represents a recognition on the part of the government that such channels of communication and dialogue were not functioning properly and effectively. One further point that the new government has dealt with was the need for highlighting the values of integrity in dealing with our national causes and enhancing the meanings of general service, which means safeguarding the interests of citizens and dealing with them in a spirit of cooperation and mutual respect. The paper noted that the call for control on public expenditure and safeguarding public funds should on top of the priorities at the present stage. This call should be translated in to a clear cut programme, aiming to achieve constant goals, by adopting an effective mechanism.

Thatcher's decade — growth of an 'institution'

By Maureen Johnson
The Associated Press

tradition — cloak legal profession and the education system.

Enduring legacy

LONDON — Many Britons barely remember life before Margaret Thatcher, and many more can't imagine what Britain will be like after she's gone.

In the decade since she came to power May 4, 1979, something of a curiosity as Europe's first female prime minister, she has become, in her own words, an institution.

Having begun with uncertain prospects for survival, she now has had the longest uninterrupted tenure in 160 years of British politics.

She dominates national life more than any prime minister since Winston Churchill in World War II. She was asked once what she had changed.

"Everything," she replied. So all-embracing is the free-market crusade called "Thatcherism" that even the name of her Conservative Party has become something of a misnomer.

Columnist Alan Watkins wrote in the liberal weekly Observer that conservatism means preserving the old, but "Mrs. Thatcher has not only refused to put the clock back; she has put it forward, turning the hands furiously, so that bells chime unpredictably and clockwork jangles."

She has quelled the labour unions. She has sold off vast segments of the state-owned sector, turning traditional money-losers like steel into profitable enterprises and in the process building an army of new shareholders. She has shifted the entire political agenda rightward while achieving the international recognisability of a superpower leader.

To her admirers, the iron lady — a nickname given her by the Soviets — is a national savior who ended Britain's postwar cycle of confrontation and decline.

"She has brought back the spirit of enterprise and she is trying to make everyone feel important again," said Valerie Thompson, head of London bond trading firm, Euromarket Trading Consultants.

To her detractors, she is an anti-union bull set free in a China shop, destroying revered institutions and instituting policies that have raised the number of people on welfare and kept inflation irritatingly high.

Now, after a third consecutive election victory in 1987, Thatcher is trying to carry the revolution into the heartland of the old Britain by shaking up the 40-year-old National Health Service, the

It has been, says Hugo Young, her latest biographer, "An era in which an ordinary politician, labouring under many disadvantages, grew into an international figure who did some extraordinary things to her country."

It is a formidable legacy, and most analysts agree much of it will endure.

"There will never again be moribund nationalised industries," said Robert Worcester, head of Pollsters Market Opinion and Research International. "There will never again be trade union baronies, there will never again be the working-class rejection of middle-class values by the majority."

The May 1979 election followed a winter of strikes that left the dead buried and garbage piled in cities, and spelled the end of James Callaghan's Labour government.

Thatcher began with a prolonged spell of bitter medicine: high unemployment as loss-making heavy industries were pared, state spending curbs, then an onslaught against heavy-spending labour-controlled local governments.

If miners and steelworkers were the Labour Party's heroes, small businessmen were Thatcher's, inspired by her father, in whose grocery she helped out while growing up in the north England town of Grantham.

Taxes were cut, currency controls abolished and an enlarged police force deployed to deal with strike pickets now illegal under her union-curbing laws.

By 1981 she was rated the most unpopular prime minister since opinion polls began. But the following year came victory in the 74-day Falklands islands war against Argentina. Her popularity soared, and she was re-elected in 1983 with an increased majority.

It enabled her to carry on the revolution, and the fruits are beginning to appear in a higher growth rate, a budget surplus and a sustained consumer boom.

Male average earnings at £273 (\$466) a week have risen by nearly one-third in real terms since 1979.

Two-thirds of Britons are homeowners, up from 50 per cent in 1979. Trade union membership, down by one-third, is equaled by the some 9 million stockholders.

But official statistics indicate the number living on welfare has doubled to 9.4 million, or 17 per cent of the population, inflation nags away at 7.9 per cent, forcing interest rates to stay high at 13 per cent. Unemployment is nearly 7 per cent, higher than in the United States and Japan but lower than in France, Italy and West Germany.

Mixed feelings

While opinion polls indicate that Britons generally don't like Thatcher — a Gallup poll last July showed 54 per cent disliked her personally — but they respect her enough to re-elect her. Still, she is often accused of going too far.

"Change and reform have become ends in themselves," left-wing political scientist Ben Fimlott commented in the weekly New Statesman and Society.

"This is a government and, above all, a prime minister, that now believes it can break any convention, dispatch any sacred cow to the abattoir with absolute impunity."

Critics say Thatcher has stayed in power despite lack of majority support.

The most recent poll, a Harris survey in April for the Observer newspaper, showed Conservative support remaining about the same as the 42 per cent in the last election, with Labour improving to 39 per cent from 30 per cent in

the 1987 balloting. Supporters of smaller opposition parties or uncommitted voters make up the rest of the sample.

Divided opposition

The opposition parties have been divided by internal squabbling over issues, personal disputes and strategy on how best to unseat Thatcher. The left-of-centre vote has split twice since she first won power, helping her to huge majorities in the House of Commons on less than half the vote.

The division between the prosperous south and unemployment-stricken north also has widened in Thatcher's decade.

It's not all her fault. The north has always been poorer than the south. The Thatcher era happens to coincide with the decline of heavy industry, the north's traditional mainstay, and the south's closer proximity to the lucrative markets of continental Europe.

But although the state spends more on the north than the south, the predominant feeling among northerners is that Thatcher cares little for regions that are not natural Conservative constituencies. Thus, the Conservative vote has plummeted in the north, in Scotland, separatist nationalism is at its strongest in 10 years.

Thatcher has made the language of debate more combative and divisive. She declares she wants to bury socialism in Bri-

tain, and some opponents adopt the trappings of East European dissidents. The latest anti-Thatcherite organisation calls itself Charter 88, modelled on Czechoslovakia's dissident Charter 77.

Labour legislator Kim Howells acknowledges that when Thatcher came to power, "the left was largely bankrupt of ideas about what to do about British industry. It did not come to terms with the things Thatcher was talking about ... in a sense we became the reactionaries."

Thatcher's policies have brought her into conflict with large parts of the establishment: Church of England bishops, the British Broadcasting Corp., the universities, even Queen Elizabeth II. The queen was said to be upset over discord in the Commonwealth, the association of former British colonies, at Thatcher's refusal to impose tough economic sanctions on South Africa.

Obsessed with secrecy

The prime minister is also accused of being obsessed with official secrecy and too eager to use the courts to gag disclosures involving sensitive areas.

Thatcher is also widely accused of undermining free speech with such measures as banning broadcast interviews with the Irish Republican Army and its supporters, and revising the 78-year-old

official secrets act to make it even harder to report news that the government feels should be suppressed.

Her government's protracted and ultimately fruitless battle to keep the retired secret-service operative Peter Wright from publishing "Spycatcher," his memoirs, fuelled charges she is obsessed with secrecy.

She argues the ban on broadcasts of IRA interviews is essential to fight terrorism and that the Wright case was meant to bind secret agents to their lifelong secrecy oaths.

But the results sometimes go palpably against the grain: an issue of Harper's magazine with an article by a former intelligence operative is banned in Britain, a BBC studio is raided by police over a documentary on a secret spy satellite.

"She is destroying, or going a good way to destroy, some of our finest institutions," said James Cornford, former professor of politics at Edinburgh University who heads a new left-wing think tank, the Institute for Public Policy Research.

"I don't think she saved us from anything," he added. "And she has cost us a great deal."

The intellectual left's frustration is compounded by an entire generation that knows only Thatcherism.

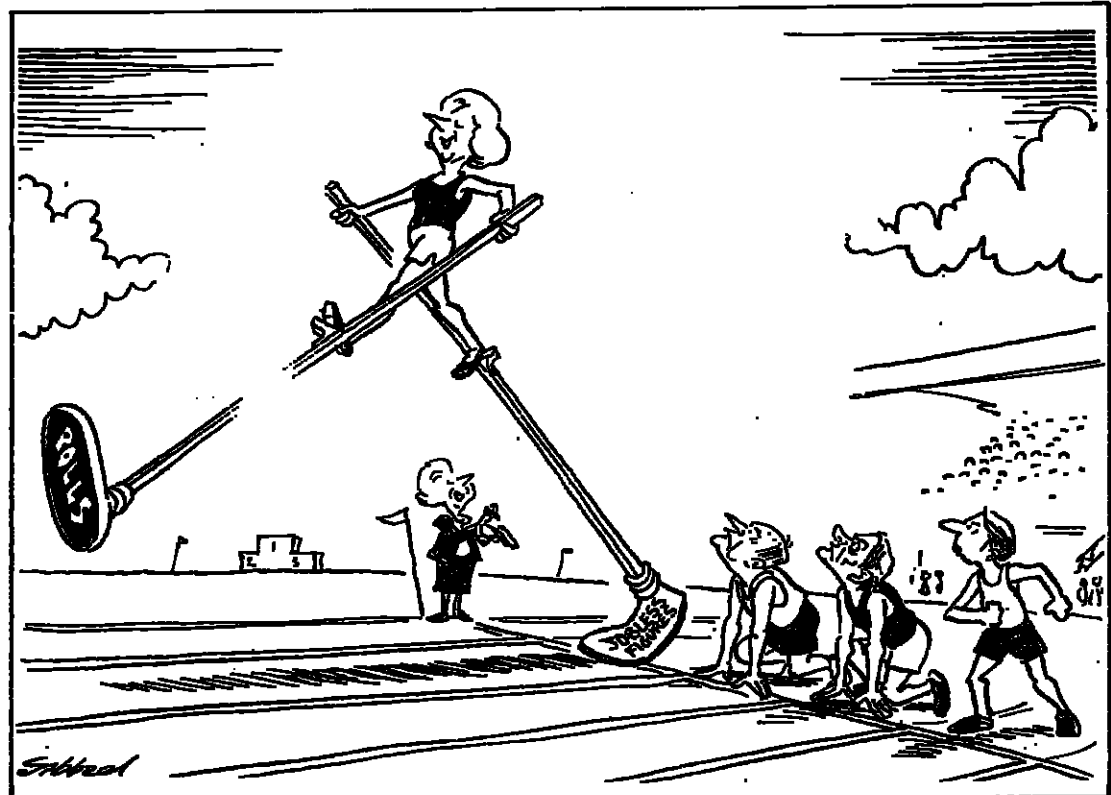
"It's become sort of normal," Cornford said, recalling a recent talk he gave to a group of high school seniors. "It was clear they really couldn't conceive of anybody else being prime minister."

Plans to privatise the national water supply and revamp property taxes are arousing widespread suspicion. Doctors and lawyers, ordinarily a Conservative constituency, are deeply hostile to her proposals for reforming health and the legal profession.

Critics point to Britain's creaking infrastructure — congested roads, a poorly run railway system, sewers dating to Victorian times — and insist that Thatcher is wrong to place the burden of renewal on private investment.

But she already is talking of beating all records by running for a fourth, five-year term in the 1990s. The election must be held by 1992, but Thatcher can call it any time she feels most likely to win. The 1987 balloting was called a year early.

"I think I have become a bit of an institution," she said after her third election victory. "And the place wouldn't be quite the same without this old institution. People seem to think, 'she isn't so bad, is she, this Maggie.'"



After scaling the heights, U.N. finds itself on a new plateau

By Anthony Goodman
Reuters

UNITED NATIONS — After scaling dizzying diplomatic heights in 1988, the United Nations finds it has only reached a new plateau, with solutions to most of its problems still towering in the distance.

From Afghanistan to the Gulf and from Cyprus to Western Sahara, the remarkable progress achieved last year has slowed to a snail's pace.

The 1988 Nobel Peace Prize that the United Nations won for peace-keeping has been tarnished by a poor start in organising an operation to oversee Namibia's transition to independence from South Africa.

The signing last April of the Geneva accords on Afghanistan, after six years of hard bargaining, marked a high point for the world organisation and led to the withdrawal of Soviet troops in February this year.

But the agreement, which also barred Pakistan and Afghanistan from meddling in each other's affairs, has done nothing to halt nearly 10 years of warfare between the Soviet-backed Kabul government and the U.S./Pakistan-supported Mujahedeen guerrillas.

More than five million refugees who fled to Pakistan and Iran are deterred from returning home by the continuing bloodshed and by millions of mines that will still be claiming victims well into the next century.

One of Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar's greatest personal achievements was the Aug. 20 ceasefire in the Iran-Iraq war, the longest and bloodiest conflict since World War II.

Nearly nine months later, the two armies still sit glowering at each other, often only a few metres apart, while the secretary-general confronts a brick wall in his efforts to turn the shaky truce into a full-fledged peace.

After another round of so-called "proximity talks" in Geneva this month with Foreign Minister Tareq Aziz of Iraq, Perez de Cuellar said: "We have made no real progress... although the process continues..."

The two sides have barely budged from positions adopted when the talks began five days after the ceasefire took force.

Iraq insists on priority for clearing the Shatt Al Arab, the debris-strewn waterway that

the succession to the country's 86-year-old spiritual leader, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

In another burst of U.N.-inspired activity last August, the leaders of the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot communities

"The 1988 Nobel Peace Prize that the United Nations won for peace-keeping has been tarnished by a poor start in organising an operation to oversee Namibia's transition to independence from South Africa."

political uncertainty in Iran over forms the southern border of the warring nations, while Iran says the first order of business must be the withdrawal of remaining Iraqi troops from about 2,600 square kilometres of Iranian territory.

Another complicating factor is

pledged themselves to a June 1, 1989, target for resolving differences that have left their island partitioned for almost 15 years and the north occupied by Turkish troops.

Since then they have engaged in some of the most intensive

negotiations since inter-communal violence erupted barely three years after Cyprus won independence from Britain in 1960.

But, as periodic reporting visits to the United Nations have made clear, President George Vassiliou, representing the Greek-Cypriots, and Turkish-Cypriot leader Rauf Denktaş can agree, at most, only to continue talking. June 1 is likely to be only the latest in a long list of unmet deadlines.

The U.N. operation in Namibia, when fully launched, will involve 4,650 troops and more than 1,500 civilians and police and aims to bring the territory to independence by next April.

But the U.N. transition assistance group (UNTAG) is only now approaching its full comple-

ment of troops, nearly a month after the operation got under way.

In the meantime, bloody clashes between South African troops and police and infiltrating black nationalist guerrillas belonging to the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) have left more than 300 dead.

UNTAG has been castigated by SWAPO's African and other supporters for not being fully manned by the April 1 start-up date and for permitting South African forces to take the field, instead of being confined to barracks in accordance with the U.N.'s Namibia independence plan.

UNTAG's next big challenge will be to ensure free and fair elections in November for an

assembly that will write a constitution for the sprawling territory, the size of France and West Germany combined, with a population of 1.3 million.

The U.N.'s impartiality will be under close scrutiny since it has given SWAPO millions of dollars in subsidies and the General Assembly has adopted countless resolutions declaring SWAPO the sole legitimate representative of the Namibian people.

Difficulties could arise if the elections, in which SWAPO is heavily favoured, give it less than the two-thirds majority needed to write its own constitution. At best there could be protracted political wrangling among the various Namibian parties and at worst the process could be marred by violence.

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Where centuries meet

A melting pot of mystery and minarets, rosewood and Roman ruins, culture and carpets, silks and silver. This enchanting melange of old and new is Damascus where the past meets the present.

By Habib Salloum

DAMASCUS — Proud of being the oldest inhabited capital city in the world, she drapes her history around her like layers of garments, which the visitor must patiently peel away to unveil tantalising traces of Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman eras, which stand alongside the heritage of the older influences of the Armenians and Umayyads.

The Damascus of today is a mesmerising mixture of ancient and modern, a bustling home to three million inhabitants. But while the air is peppered with hooting horns the cries of street vendors of everything from sticky cakes to noisy tapes of Arabic pop music and the constant din of chattering crowds, it has an unexpected aura of serenity.

Perhaps the pervading sense of tranquility stems from the River Barada which begins its meandering at the foot of nearby mountains and gives life to verdant fields, heavily-laden orchards and brightly-coloured gardens before

continuing its lazy journey through the centre of the Syrian capital. The air, filled with a subtle coolness, mounts the slopes of Mount Qassioun, the centre of life of modern well-to-do Damascus. There, embassies, apartment towers and sumptuous villas line the leafy streets. French-style alfresco restaurants, and coffee shops open until the small hours, tempting tourists and Damascenes alike.

But far from the luxurious eating houses of Mount Qassioun is the old city with its traditional cafes where bearded patriarchal figures sit drinking glasses of sweet tea or Turkish coffee, drawing happily on the silver tube of a *narhiye* (waterpipe) as they play backgammon.

It is in this old city where the clash of centuries is at its most dramatic. Roman colonnades plunge into a clutter of stalls selling books, beads, perfume and trinkets. Framed between the columns of the Temple of Jupiter are the minarets of the Great Mosque built by Caliph Walid in

the eighth century.

The tribute to God was his life's dream and no extravagance was spared. Thousands of craftsmen were summoned from Constantinople and ships were ordered to collect precious metals to decorate its structure. It cost him seven years' revenues but when the accounts came in he refused to read them saying: "We have spent this for God and we will not count it."

The courtyard of the mosque is a cool oasis of calm. On leaving its confines the visitor comes face to face with the world of commerce and craftsmen — the Souk Al Hamadiyah, a giant exhibition of the centuries old Syrian handicrafts industry.

Syrian craftsmanship has developed over centuries; artisans cling jealously to their skills, passed down through generations, firmly resisting the advent of modern industrial machinery. The Souk Al Hamadiyah, otherwise known as the "Street called Straight" is the home of craftsmen employing the skills of old.

Upon negotiating the entrance to the souk — a scene resembling a siege, with taxis, money-changers and touts keenly soliciting business — the visitor's eye is stunned by the cascades of carpets and kaftans, bridal gowns and plastic bowls — a blinding jumble of incongruities.

In some of the 26 alleys comprising the souk carpenters make tables inlaid with bone of ivory, and metalworkers produce table-tops and trays from copper and brass. "My forefathers were all metal people," they say with such determined pride that one can almost imagine their ancestors peering over their shoulders.

And vying for attention alongside the glassblowers whose forbears taught their art to Venetian apprentices in the Middle Ages, is hand-produced Damascene brocade, a silky fabric interwoven manually with silver and/or gold threads in elaborate designs,

which has beautified homes and adorned women through the ages.

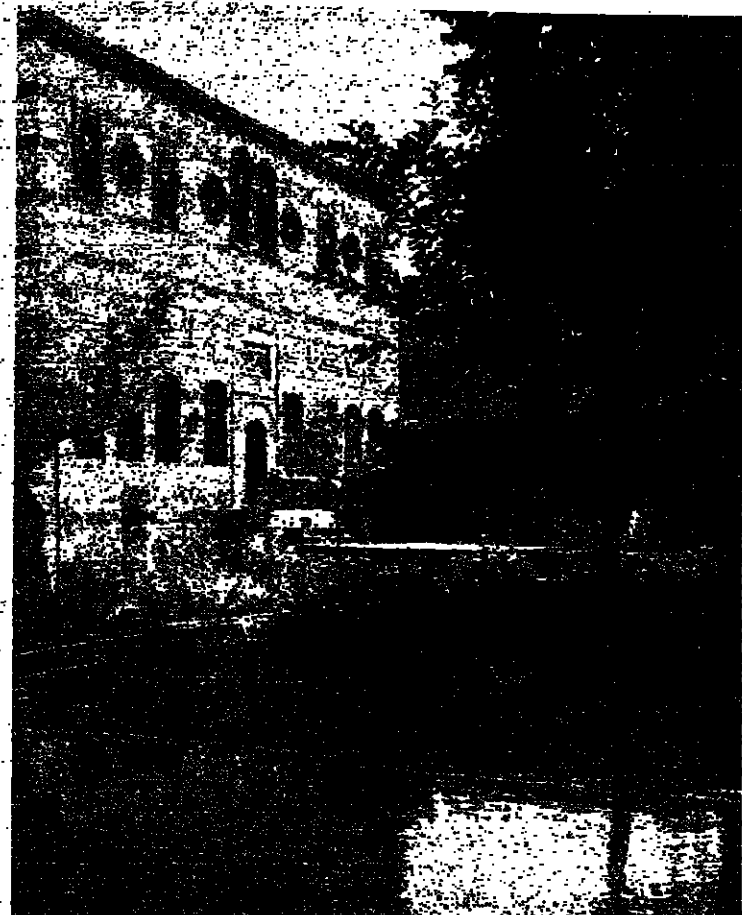
The jewel in the Damascus crown is hand-made jewellery — silver and gold creations inlaid with turquoise and semi-precious stones about which runs a saying: "The art of jewellery was born in Aleppo, grew up in Cairo and came to Damascus to die." Whatever the saying, the art is very much alive today, providing visitors with good buys.

The sales techniques of the salesmen are an entertainment in themselves. "You like a shufti inside my shop," he may begin. "You are broke? You will not have enough to eat? What is eating? You can eat every day. Tomorrow... phfft! But this cloth will give you joy for years." In the meantime he finds a small gift for your mother, sister, sweetheart, offers you a tiny cup of sweep Turkish coffee while he unearths faded photographs of a trip he made to Paris some 20 years before.

A visitor lucky enough to be left with a few Syrian pounds at the end of his shopping spree may empty his pockets by buying some flowers from one of the nosegay sellers. Or he may invest in some sherbet from the sherbet seller who announces his arrival with a clink and a clash of metal bowls, like castanets.

Perhaps he will spend his last pounds by placing his foot at the disposal of the boot-black who gives an artistic show of mixing polishes from his brass-lidded pots to an exact shade.

Or maybe he will succumb to the honey-tongued persuasion of an old man in a fez to buy a paper cone of delicious walnuts. As he walks away from the old city he may reflect on the sense of continuity it provides, in contrast to the high-rise concrete, traffic and hurried pace of the modern world. (Emirates Inflight magazine)



Amid the constant din of the Syrian capital, the 238 year old El Azem Palace strikes a serene, dignified pose.



Carpet sellers display their wares on a roadside.



A fruit stall in the Damascus Market.



A variety of hand-woven baskets and brooms in a corner of the Damascus Market — a giant exhibition of the centuries-old Syrian handicrafts industry.

No one ever sleeps on Ghana's roads

In some nations, country roads are dotted with billboards advertising everything from toasters to suntan lotion, but in Ghana such plain old commercialism is relatively rare. What the traveller is treated to instead is a never-ending stream of homespun philosophy from the owners of trucks, buses and vans. Colourful hand-stenciled signs are emblazoned above vehicle windshields or on doors announcing — "God Never Sleeps," "Beware of Friends," "The Lord Forgives" or "Hi Baby."

By Neil Gallagher
World Food Programme Journal

What inevitably disrupts your reading is the condition of the Ghanaian roads themselves. A "lunar buggy" is probably the only vehicle that could handle the incessant stream of potholes with equanimity.

Even the land cruiser, ubiquitous in the Third World and laudable in many respects, is not quite up to the task. With a suspension that is mostly theoretical and back seats designed for penance, it is no match for what Ghana's roads are dishing out. You may get where you are going, but you are convinced that pieces have been left behind.

If the country's roads are a little rough for the posteriors of visitors from the developed world, they have been a good deal rougher on the beleaguered Ghanaian economy. Since Ghana led Africa in independence movement in 1957, little has been done to improve the nation's transport infrastructure. After a brief period of expansion in the 1960's road conditions began to deteriorate badly from lack of maintenance and heavy wear, especially from large trucks used to haul timber.

What was once a serviceable network of rural roads is now closer to an obstacle course, with cars and trucks spewing up clouds of red dust as they bump along on good days and spitting mud all over the place as they struggle through on bad ones. So thick is the dust that if it were not for strong periodic rains the plants caked with dirt along the roadside would probably die from lack of sunlight.

Villagers trekking back and forth from local farms and streams, carrying produce and water, are sometimes completely lost in the clouds. Goats and

chickens test driver reflexes with their disconcerting habit of suddenly appearing in the midst of the dust and hurling themselves into the paths of oncoming vehicles.

Needless to say, no one is quite happy with the current state of affairs, least of all the Ghanaian government, which is struggling to revive the nation's economy by carrying out a structural adjustment programme negotiated with the International Monetary Fund. The decrepit road system impedes the nation's ability to send its major export items to ports for shipment overseas.

Timber, for example, can no longer be shipped directly from the central region near Kumasi to the port of Takoradi because the Kumasi-Takoradi road is a nightmare. Truckers are forced to de-

liver to Takoradi via Accra which sharply increases costs and reduces the competitiveness of Ghanaian timber. Keeping up the flow of cocoa, timber, rubber and minerals is crucial if the ruling Provisional National Defence Council is to succeed in pulling Ghana out of its prolonged economic slump.

Food to build roads

Working with the World Bank on a country-wide effort to rebuild transport infrastructure, the World Food Programme is supplying food aid to workers engaged in repairing rural roads, building culverts, patching potholes and clearing blocked drainage holes which periodically render long stretches of road virtually impassable after heavy rain.

WFP works with the Ghana Highways Authority (GHA) on the approximately 14,000 kilometres of trunk roads which connect the various regions, districts or towns, and the Department of Feeder Roads (DFR) responsible for the upkeep of about 14,000 kilometres of feeder roads which provide access mainly to villages. In return for a 20 per cent reduction from their wages, DFR workers receive a monthly food ration, for three people, worth from 3,000 to 5,000

cedis on the open market (US\$17-US\$30). This may not sound much, but when the monthly wage for a DFR worker is only around US\$21 the food supplement becomes rather significant. It amounts to a net-income boost of nearly 60 per cent each month. An added benefit of the scheme is that the food aid essentially acts as a non-inflationary means of increasing workers' wages.

Project off to slow start

The idea behind providing food aid was to improve the inadequate diet of the workers, reduce absenteeism and boost productivity. The project has largely succeeded in the first two counts but falls short on the third.

While a related food-aid project repairing railroad lines is doing well on the productivity side, the results of the road rehabilitation component, begun in October 1985, have been disappointing so far. A WFP evaluation in April 1987 found progress slow and the productivity of DFR labourers well below expectations. The major bottleneck appears to be a lack of needed inputs, something that is beyond the workers or WFP's control at this point.

"We cannot lay the roads without the bitumen," complain foremen at a work site outside Kuma-

si in the central part of the country. "Sometimes we get it but most of the time we don't. The supplier says the bills haven't been paid." Fuel, spare parts and tools have also been in short supply and the government has so far been slow in funding essential maintenance largely due to severe budget constraints.

The GHA's Mobile Maintenance Unit, however, has been a bright spot. It has managed to get adequate supplies and has done extremely well in meeting its targets, achieving roughly two-thirds of its goal for reconstructing roads and virtually 100 per cent of the goals for improving, resurfacing and resealing roads.

On the whole, road work by private Ghanaian contractors appears to be proceeding more smoothly than most government efforts. At Selwi-Wiawso, Stan Matsusiak of the International Labour Organisation reported that the World Bank is pleased with progress made under a pilot project using private contractors and has "already decided to expand to 19 contractors employing 30 people each."

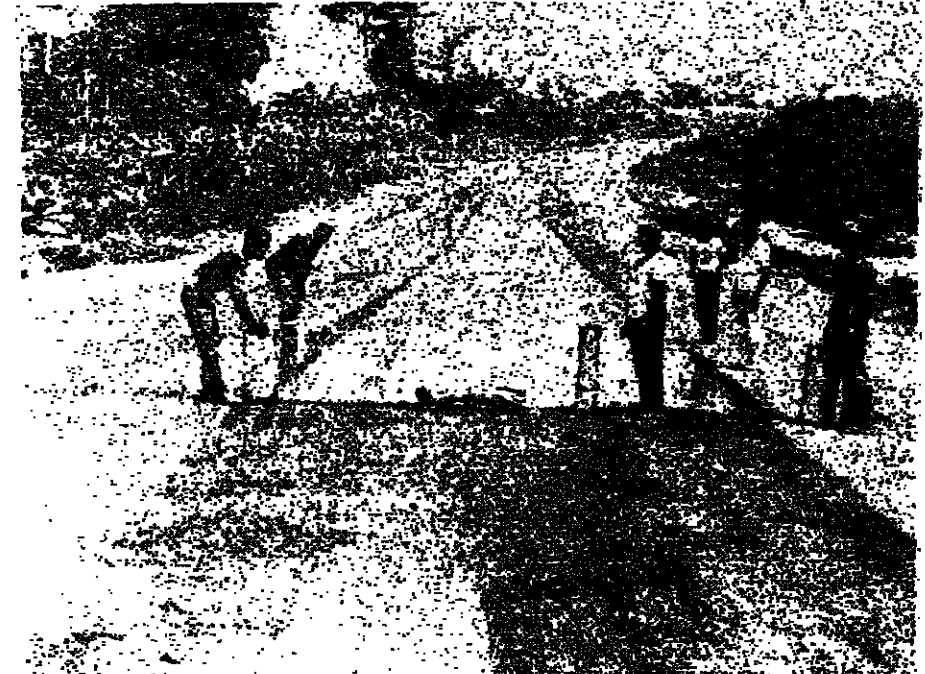
But at this point, private labourers do not receive food aid, nor do the local people who work on the roads near their villages under the DFR's supervision. Understandably, they are not

pleased to be working along side DFR personnel who are getting a monthly food ration while they are not. "Contract and community labourers complain bitterly about not receiving the food aid," notes Matsusiak.

WFP Ghana is looking at ways to expand the food-aid coverage, at least to the villagers because they play a critical role in road maintenance. However, the logistics are a bit difficult since the villagers work for only a few weeks or days on a site.

Despite some early setbacks, WFP Ghana has not given up on the feeder roads part of project. They have already managed to overcome major transport problems in getting food out to remote areas, and road workers, while they are always willing to ask for more food, rarely complain about the deliveries.

Early delays in shipments, or doubled-up shipments in which several months' rations came together all at once, have been reduced significantly. With logistical problems more under control, the WFP office is looking for ways to work with the government to get needed inputs in place and boost productivity to the point that Ghana's rural roads become an asset rather than a liability as the country strives for lasting prosperity.



Without decent roads, villagers are unable to transport their produce to the local markets for sale.



Leningrad's 'scandal-monger' brings glasnost to TV

By Andrew Katell
The Associated Press

LENINGRAD — A lost bull roams a busy city street. A man is shown in the hospital after a New Year's Eve bombing blasted away his legs during a downtown march.

These and other eye-opening images are flashing across Soviet television screens as glasnost, President Mikhail S. Gorbachev's drive for openness, goes video.

Traditionally, the Kremlin has used state-run television as it did other media — to reach the masses with propaganda rather than programmes about things that directly affect their lives or were just plain fun.

The airwaves still are largely full of sleepy documentaries on subjects like the grain harvest. The leadership still commands unlimited time, and news shows still spend a lot of time reporting lists of government leaders seeing each other off on trips.

But Gorbachev is a more lively TV personality than his predecessors and frequently turns to television to make speeches and broadcast his street-side talks with people.

For the first time this winter, parliamentary candidates debated each other on television. Western music videos are shown routinely. An occasional foreign commercial or film gives Soviets a glimpse of Western lifestyle.

One trailblazing programme, which featured the off-beat stories about the bull, prostitutes and bombing, is "600 seconds," a fast-paced live show on Leningrad television that has become a smash hit since its December 1987 premiere.

One avid fan of 30-year-old anchorman Alexander Nevzorov said his programme "shows the Soviet people what they were torn away from all their lives, things that we learned to close our eyes to."

Every day but Sunday, 15 million people in Leningrad, Moscow and other regions can catch up via television on the latest sensations from the Soviet Union's second-largest city.

"600 seconds" is a hybrid of news, scandal and entertainment. Leningraders have nicknamed the top-rated show "our city scandal-monger."

At 10 p.m., a rock-music introduction is followed by 10 minutes of news reports read live by a studio announcer, and videotaped reports presented at machine-gun speed in down-to-

earth style. A digital clock flashes periodically onto the screen to tick down the remaining seconds.

Everything about the show sets it apart from ordinary broadcasts, which speak a formal language, spend a lot of time on each subject and are visually dull.

About 200 culls and dozens of letters a day pour into the tiny, dingy room in Leningrad's TV centre where two harried producers and Nevzorov work.

'Sensations'

Nevzorov's irreverent surfaces in every broadcast, and he relishes stirring up the town with what he calls "sensations." The programme consists largely of crime reports, but also has a heavy dose of the bizarre, such as a piece about the city's dirtiest toilet.

In a recent broadcast, "600 seconds" took on one of Leningrad's biggest department stores, accusing its employees of selling highly sought Finnish clothing under the table. The store demanded a retraction, but Nevzorov told viewers later that police had investigated and that "no excuses can be made."

Producer Kirill M. Shishkin said the programme has stopped reporting about dogs because the staff was swamped with calls for days by people offering to adopt a canine after one broadcast reported his master was killed in a car accident.

Nevzorov, the show's co-creator and main anchor, races around this city of 4.9 million people all day to gather material for his broadcast, relying heavily on tips from the public and police.

He has become a celebrity without any of the privileges that would go along with such status in the West — no secretary, no private office, no chauffeur-driven limousine and a salary of \$475 a month.

Adoring fans place flowers on his car and beg for autographs. The Soviet press has praised his pioneering style, and colleagues say he has an uncanny sense of what will excite the public. Journalism students at Moscow State University are studying his programme as a model of how news should be reported on television.

But Nevzorov, a former horse trainer and TV scriptwriter, bristles when the word "journalist" is mentioned. He said most Soviet journalists could not come up with the stories he does, and he doesn't agree with the Western notion that journalists should be objective and avoid sensationalism.

He openly acknowledges that cooperatives, the fledgling private businesses spawned by Gorbachev's economic reforms, are a target.

"Whenever we have the opportunity to nail them, we do," he said in an interview.

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Allowing for higher exports

Syrian oil output rises rapidly

DAYR AL ZAWR (R) — Syria's surging oil output could rise by almost 45 per cent by July, giving a welcome boost to foreign exchange revenue, oil industry sources say.

They say output could touch 500,000 barrels per day (b/d) by August as the new Omar field and related fields allow Syria, which borders oil giants Saudi Arabia and Iraq, to raise its modest exports.

Syria, unlike Iraq and Saudi Arabia, does not belong to the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). Oil will help pay an estimated \$15 billion owed to the Soviet Union and other East European countries.

Omar in east Syria is already producing 100,000 b/d after coming on stream in February, a production operator said during a rare visit by journalists to the eastern fields.

Nearby Thayem and Ward fields produce 65,000 and 40,000 b/d respectively and older fields in the north produce 150,000 b/d, giving total output of 355,000 b/d.

Domestic consumption of oil and gas is less than half current oil production.

The industry sources said output from Omar, discovered near the Iraqi border in 1987, and the

related Omar North and Tanak Tayan fields could add another 100,000-150,000 b/d to national output by August.

An oil ministry official said 10 foreign oil companies including Shell, Total, Elf, British Petroleum and Occidental were searching for new fields in eastern and western areas. Initial results were encouraging.

The eastern fields are operated by Al Furat Petroleum Company (AFPC), owned by the state-owned Syrian Petroleum Company and the Royal Dutch/Shell Group of the Netherlands.

An official said 10 wells at a depth of 3,000 to 4,000 metres were operating at Omar. Production was set to rise at little cost and two storage tanks with a capacity of 75,000 cubic metres had been built.

The official said the oil was high-grade, with API gravity of 40 and no sulphur.

The Middle East Economic Survey (MEES) newsletter said in February that newly discovered fields at nearby Shahel and

Al Isba would come on stream next year.

It added that about seven wells drilled in the nearby Al Sham concession had all struck oil.

Oil from the eastern fields is pumped 500 kilometres to Homs and Banyas refineries on the coast through a 30-32 inch (76-81 centimetre) pipeline which used to carry Iraqi oil for export until a political rift nearly 10 years ago.

An official at Thayem field

said output there could rise by 15,000 b/d and that its oil had API gravity of 37-38. There were 13 wells at a depth of 3,000 metres.

Heavy crude from the Sweidieh, Rumiland and Jibish fields in the north, which began production in 1975, is also pumped by pipeline to the coast. The fields are operated exclusively by the Syrian Petroleum Company.

Poland stops principal payments to banks

WARSAW (Agencies) — Poland has suspended principal repayments to its commercial bank creditors and wants to revise a debt rescheduling agreement it signed with them last year, a senior Polish government official has said.

Deputy Finance Minister Janusz Sawicki told Reuters in an interview that Poland had already advised bankers last month it might not be able to make a \$24 million principal repayment due shortly.

Sawicki indicated that this signalled a switch in Poland's policy since 1981 of giving favoured treatment to the London Club of commercial bank creditors while virtually ignoring the demands of the Paris Club of creditor countries.

Poland owes about two-thirds of its \$39 billion debt to the Paris Club and the rest to over 500 commercial banks.

It has been paying about \$2 billion annually in interest to the banks and only \$100 million to the Paris Club.

Sawicki said Poland now wanted to set its relationship with the banks and the Paris Club on an equal footing.

It would seek a new deal with the banks, including a review of a major rescheduling agreement signed July 20, 1988, at a meeting with bank representatives in Vienna May 10.

This was part of a drive opened by Warsaw this year to normalise financial relations with the West through parallel agreements with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Paris Club and the commercial banks, Sawicki said.

He said the decision to suspend principal repayments to the banks involved relatively small sums and was taken pending the Vienna talks reviewing relations with the banks.

Shortages start after end of rationing this year

Meanwhile, gasoline shortages have produced long lines and closed stations four months after the end of rationing, forcing the government to announce that it

Slump forces austerity on Wall Street

NEW YORK (R) — Eighteen months after the 1987 stock market crash, the U.S. securities industry is still in a slump and brokerage houses are being forced to cut back on staff and find other ways to slash expenses.

First Boston Corp., the latest victim of cutbacks, has said it plans to lay off nearly 200 employees.

Investment powerhouses such as Drexel Burnham Lambert Inc., Goldman, Sachs and Co. and Salomon Bros. Inc. have all pruned staffs in recent months, and the shake-out is expected to

reach virtually all of Wall Street's major players.

The securities business has slumped about 35 per cent since the October 1987 crash, analysts said, causing more than 17,000 employees to lose their jobs.

First Boston's employment will drop to about 4,700 after the cutbacks, from 5,700 before the crash, a source close to the situation told Reuters.

"It might be the beginning of a new wave (of industry layoffs) if things don't get any better," said analyst Perrin Long of Lipper Analytical Services.

"The Street did not do well in the face of rising interest rates in the first quarter," said analyst Michael Goldstein at Sanford C. Bernstein Co., referring to general securities activity.

Higher interest rates are the bane of the stock market, raising corporate borrowing costs and luring equity investors to interest-bearing assets. U.S. treasuries have yielded over nine per cent in recent weeks.

In addition, "breakeven levels are just too high for the current level of activity," Goldstein said. High salaries for superstar bankers, as well as staggering rents on New York City office buildings, have saddled investment banks with massive overhead costs.

Salomon Inc. said it lost \$28 million in the first quarter, reversing profits of \$173 million last year. Salomon cited "adverse trading conditions" in its securities and commodities business.

Four days earlier, American Express Co. said its Shearson

Lehman Hutton Holdings Inc. unit lost \$15 million in the last quarter, versus profits of \$75 million in 1988.

A new attitude has gripped managers of Wall Street houses, Long said. "As we move into the 1990s, staffing levels of various departments probably will go up or down, depending on the level of profitability, more quickly than in the past," he said. Staff can be hired quickly when a particular business segment begins to pick up, Long said.

Mergers and acquisitions, high-yield financing and merchant banking are now considered some of the industry's most profitable areas, industry executives said.

High-yield securities, also known as "junk bonds," have become a popular way for companies to finance takeovers. Merchant banks, unlike investment banks, lend their own money to finance a deal.

But retail operations have not fared so well.

Unilever ends talks on \$1.5b Faberge takeover

AMSTERDAM (R) — Anglo-Dutch foods-to-detergent group Unilever PLC-N.V. has said it had pulled out of talks to buy the U.S. luxury toiletries firm Faberge Inc. because the price was too high.

In February Unilever said it had agreed in principle on a \$1.55 billion takeover of the Faberge and Elizabeth Arden businesses from the Riklis Family Corporation.

"Riklis has proposed significant changes to the terms of the deal which would involve us in substantial additional costs," Unilever spokeswoman Lia De Keizer told Reuters.

The acquisition of Faberge was fixed in principle on Feb. 10, but was subject to the negotiation of a definitive agreement within 90 days.

New-York based Faberge's brand names include Brut and Babe, while Elizabeth Arden markets its own lines such as Chloe and Lagerfeld. The two businesses had combined 1988 sales exceeding \$800 million, with operating profits of more than \$100 million.

"Riklis wanted the transfer of assets to take place in phases, which was not acceptable to us," De Keizer said. She did not comment further.

In its official statement Unilever quoted Chairman Floris Maljers as saying: "At the agreed price the acquisition of Faberge

and Elizabeth Arden would have been an important step forward in our strategy for personal products."

"They are now being offered at a price and on terms which do not offer reasonable value to our shareholders," it added.

De Keizer said Unilever would continue looking for other acquisitions. "Our strategic objectives include making major acquisitions as well as buying smaller companies," she added.

When Unilever's interest in Faberge was first publicised share analysts described it as a sound strategic move enhancing the group's U.S. presence and increasing its role in personal care products — the group's two key objectives.

They saw it as a logical step after the \$3.1 billion takeover of U.S. Cheesecake-Ponds in February 1987, which pushed Unilever from sixth to second place in personal care worldwide.

Unilever said in February the addition of Faberge would have left the group number one or two in personal care, vying for top position with France's L'Oréal.

Faberge was bought by the Riklis group in 1984 for about \$180 million. The holding company acquired Elizabeth Arden for \$700 million at the end of 1987. Other Riklis holdings including Samsonite luggage and Culligan water softeners.

ECONOMIC NEWS BRIEFS

Iraq opens \$240m irrigation project

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraq Saturday inaugurated a \$240 million irrigation and power project on the river Euphrates. Work on the new Hindiyah barrage, 80 kilometres south of Baghdad, started in October 1984, with China's State Construction Engineering Corporation the main contractor. The project includes a 60-megawatt hydro-electric power station.

Turkish foreign trade deficit widens

ANKARA (AP) — Turkey's foreign trade deficit widened to \$383.5 million in the first two months of this year from \$324.8 million a year earlier, the State Statistics institute has said. The institute also said that the trade deficit narrowed to \$91.8 million in February from \$184 million a year earlier. The institute said exports rose by 0.9 per cent in February to \$953 million from \$944.9 million in February 1988. Exports in January totaled \$771.5 million. Imports totaled \$1,044 billion in February, down by 7.4 per cent from \$1,128 billion a year earlier. Imports totaled \$1,063 billion in January. Exports in the first two months amounted to \$1,724 billion, down by seven per cent from a year earlier. Imports totaled \$2,108 billion in the January-February period, down by three per cent from a year earlier.

China to ban luxury cars for officials

PEKING (R) — China will ban imports of luxury cars immediately and end the summer tradition of moving much of the central government to the seaside, government spokesman Yuan Mu said Saturday. Yuan made the surprise announcements during talks held with students to air grievances following two weeks of campus unrest and pro-democracy protests across the country. Central government ministries virtually close down each August while officials repair to the seaside resort of Beidaihe to escape Peking's heat. But, Yuan said, in keeping with a national austerity policy launched last year to bring down inflation, meetings would not be held in the famous summer resort. Students applauded. Yuan told the three-hour meeting with selected students that China would buy no more "luxury cars" from abroad. National People's Congress delegates have also proposed that imports of cigarettes and alcoholic drinks be banned but Yuan did not say if this would be approved by government.

Bahraini firm plans \$100m urea plant

BAHRAIN (R) — Bahrain-based Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company (GPIC) will set up a \$100 million plant to produce urea, a fertiliser, the company has said. GPIC General Manager Mustapha Al Sayed told Reuters the firm's board of directors had approved plans for the project, which will be Bahrain's first downstream petrochemical plant. No timetable had yet been set but the plant would utilise ammonia already produced by GPIC and would be funded by a combination of debt and equity, he said. GPIC is owned equally by the Bahrain National Oil Co., Saudi Basic Industries Corp and Kuwait's Petrochemical Industries Co. Sayed said ammonia production at GPIC rose to 375,726 tonnes in 1988 from 335,457 in 1987 while methanol output rose to 395,899 tonnes from 389,013.

Britons fear industrial decline

LONDON (R) — Britain's efforts to slow inflationary economic growth are succeeding at the cost of a decline in business confidence, the Confederation of British Industries (CBI) has said.

The CBI, the main employers' organisation, reported a fall in industrial growth and an increase in the number of firms working below capacity in its quarterly survey of industrial trends.

"We believe there is now clear evidence that the economy is slowing down although it will be some time before the full impact of the slowdown is felt," CBI official David Wrigglesworth said.

The CBI's finding that slower growth would hit future export prospects meant mixed news for Chancellor of the Exchequer Nigel Lawson.

Wrigglesworth said: "Every effort should be made to avoid a further increase in interest rates and to bring them down just as soon as the easing of inflationary pressure permits."

The CBI warned that the strength of sterling against the dollar and the Deutschmark remained a problem for British exporters and added: "Export order books remain weak with worrying implications for the trade deficit."

The CBI said 24 per cent of firms surveyed in April were less optimistic about the overall business situation compared with 19 per cent which believed their prospects were better.

The negative balance of five per cent compared with sustained increases in business optimism in 1987 and 1988. A balance of only seven per cent of firms said growth in demand was up compared with 21 per cent in the last survey in January.

The CBI said it expected employment in manufacturing industry to fall over the next four months after showing increases in the previous seven surveys.

Exxon's profits fall

NEW YORK (R) — Exxon Corp., the largest U.S. oil company, has said first-quarter profits fell nearly 13 per cent due to lower refining and marketing margins, and its Alaskan oil spill will cost an initial \$30 million.

The company said it earned \$1.27 billion, or 99 cents per share in the quarter, down from \$1.455 billion, or \$1.06 per share, in the same period last year. Sales increased to \$22.2 billion from \$22.0 billion.

Exxon said the 1989 earnings included an initial estimate of \$30 million for salvaging and repairing the tanker Exxon Valdez as well as the partial loss of cargo. The tanker ran aground in the Prince William Sound March 24, spilling 240,000 barrels of crude oil in the worst U.S. oil spill.

It said it could not "reasonably estimate the net expense to be borne by Exxon Shipping Co." to cover the cleanup, damage claims and liabilities resulting from the spill. The company has previously said it had \$400 million in insurance to cover the costs of the spill.

"Steadily improving crude prices aided earnings from exploration and production operations in this year's first quarter, and chemical earnings continued strong," said Exxon Chairman Lawrence Rawl.

However, he said prices for petrol and other products did not rise as quickly as crude oil prices, which rose about 15 per cent to around \$20 a barrel over the

quarter, squeezing profit margins in the refining business.

Worldwide refining and marketing earnings in the first quarter fell to \$147 million from \$431 million a year ago, down a large \$416 million from 1988's fourth quarter, including a \$218 million decline in the United States.

First-quarter exploration and production earnings also declined in the quarter, to \$856 million from \$923 million a year ago, due to lower natural gas production and higher taxes.

Five major banks report big increases in profits

NEW YORK (AP) — Five of the nation's largest bank holding companies — Citicorp, Bankers Trust Corp., Wells Fargo and Co., Continental Bank Corp. and Mellon Bank Corp. — have reported an increase in their first-quarter profit over last year.

Citicorp, the nation's largest banking concern, based in New York, said its net income for the three months ended March 31 soared 48 per cent to \$529 million, or \$1.52 a share, from \$358 million, or \$1.01 a share, in 1988. The latest quarter included a \$77 million gain from the sale of a building in Tokyo.

Bankers Trust, based in New York, said it netted \$164.3 million, or \$2.02 a share, up 30 per cent from last year's earnings of \$126.0 million, or \$1.61 per share, for the same time period.

Wells Fargo, based in San Francisco, had a profit of \$141.5 million, or \$2.56 per share, an 18 per cent rise over net income of

\$120.4 million, or \$2.45 per share, in the first quarter of 1988.

Continental Bank, located in Chicago, said it earned \$76 million, or \$1.23 per share, up 10 per cent from \$69 million, or \$1.10 a share, in 1988.

Pittsburgh-based Mellon Bank said its profit more than tripled to \$77 million, or \$1.67 per share, from \$25 million, or 65 cents per share, in 1988's first quarter.

Citicorp said strength in core businesses such as consumer banking and in its investment banking sector more than offset weak foreign exchange markets and increased expenses.

He added that smaller acquisitions would be made.

The purchases of candy maker Rowntree for 6.6 billion Swiss francs (\$4 billion) and food concern Buitoni for 1.8 billion francs (\$1.1 billion) caused a big jump in Nestle's debt.

"We are in a year in which we shall consolidate and improve our finances," Maucher said.

He said Nestle had been very successful in 1988, raising net profit by more than 11 per cent to 2.04 billion francs (\$1.23 billion) and achieving a four per cent increase in volume sales.

Sales this year were likely to rise to more than 45 billion francs (\$27.2 billion), up more than 10 per cent from 1988, and net profit should rise proportionately, he said.

He defended last November's decision to let foreigners buy its registered shares for the first time.

"There was no other possibility and I believe this is now understood," he said.

Many share analysts criticised Nestle for springing the decision on an unsuspecting market. The resulting sharp gain in the reg-

Venezuela eases effects of austerity

CARACAS (Agencies) — The Venezuelan government Saturday announced measures designed to ease the effects of austerity policies and soaring inflation on the country's workers.

The official news agency Venpres published the text of two decrees President Carlos Andres Perez signed into law following a cabinet meeting.

On provides for an \$8 monthly transport bonus for public sector employees earning less than \$473 per month. The other establishes food payments of \$13.50 per month for each child of poor families up to a maximum of three children, or \$40.50 per month.

Perez sent troops into the streets Feb. 28 to quell widespread looting and rioting which left 297 people dead, according to official figures.

The government said Saturday it will reopen the Venezuela Workers Bank (Banco De Los Trabajadores Venezolanos) within 90 days. The bank, owned 49 per cent by the government and the rest by unions, was taken over

by trustees in November 1982 with severe liquidity problems.

The measures are designed to offset growing restiveness among Venezuela's labour movement over austerity policies which have driven inflation to unprecedented levels.

The central bank in March recorded its highest-ever monthly inflation rate, 21.3 per cent. Private economists predict the cost of living will rise between 60 and 80 per cent in 1989, compared to 35.5 per cent last year.

Investigation of fraud

Meanwhile, a judge has ordered two former finance ministers not to leave the country as he investigates multi-billion-dollar fraud during the administration of former president Jaime Lusinchi.

Judge Luis La Riva issued the order against former finance ministers Manuel Azpurua and Hector Hurtado, former finance vice minister Jorge Garcia Duque and Edgalla Bastardo, former director of Recadi.

La Riva and a congressional committee are investigating

alleged exchange fraud in Recadi, the now-defunct government agency that for six years was in charge of granting importers a preferential exchange rate for dollars.

Azpurua was finance minister during the first three years of Lusinchi's Social Democratic administration from 1984-1989. He was replaced by Hurtado, who had held the posts of development minister and president of the Venezuelan Investment Fund.

The exchange fraud, which involved overbilling and preferential exchange rates for non-existent imports, could amount to more than \$4 billion, said congressman Carlos Tablante, whose accusations led to the investigation.

Shortly after his Feb. 2 inauguration, President Perez, also a Social Democrat, eliminated the preferential system of granting 14.50 bolivars to the dollar for imports and foreign debt payments.

His action left only the free-market rate, which in March was about 36 bolivars to the dollar.

Nestle plans consolidation this year

ZURICH (R) — Swiss food giant Nestle, which last year swallowed Italy's Buitoni-Perugia group and Britain's Rowntree sees 1989 as a year to consolidate and plans no further big acquisitions.

Chief executive Helmut Maucher said at a news conference: "I have no desire to propose an acquisition of several billions (of Swiss francs) to the board."

He added that smaller acquisitions

would be made.

The purchases of candy maker Rowntree for 6.6 billion Swiss francs (\$4 billion) and food concern Buitoni for 1.8 billion francs (\$1.1 billion) caused a big jump in Nestle's debt.

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He defended last November's decision to let foreigners buy its registered shares for the first time.

"There was no other possibility and I believe this is now understood," he said.

istered shares was accompanied by heavy falls in the bearers, the only shares previously available to foreigners.

"If we had given the slightest indication beforehand of what we planned, it would have brought insider action into play and would have had an immediate effect in the market," Maucher said.

He said up to 15 per cent of Nestle's 203 European factories would probably be closed in the next few years as the company concentrated on plants making a single product and gave up those producing several.

Maucher made light of problems which U.S. subsidiary

Carnation Co. has had with its controversial good start H.A. infant formula.

Carnation removed the term "hypoallergenic," which means reduced potential for allergic reaction, from the packaging after controversy over the claim.

Saying part of the problem was Carnation's inexperience with handling such a product, Maucher added: "It is easy for any product... to find five children in a country who vomit."

It is then easy to photograph a mother who has given this product to her baby and is crying because it is sick. We have this problem in hand," he added.

AMMAN EXCHANGE RATES

Saturday, April 29, 1989					
Central Bank official rates					
	Buy	Sell			
U.S. dollar	538.0	542.0	French franc	84.6	85.3
Pound Sterling	906.3	916.0	Japanese yen (for 100)	204.3	205.3
Deutschemark	285.8	288.7	Dutch guilder	233.3	235.3
Swiss franc	320.6	324.0	Swedish crown	94.2	94.9
			Italian lira (for 100)	36.8	37.5
			Belgian franc (for 10)	256.3	257.4

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A Bangladeshi woman cries over the body of her mother, who was killed in Wednesday's tornado which lashed central Bangladesh.

Bangladesh storm claims more lives

DHAKA (AP) — Rescue workers recovered 60 bodies from the debris of houses ruined in a tornado which swept through central Bangladesh four days ago, leaving hundreds of people dead and thousands more seriously injured, news reports and officials said Sunday.

The New Nation, an English-language newspaper, said the bodies were found Saturday in the town of Daulatpur, 48 kilometres northwest of Dhaka.

The newspaper said also that at least 26 people died Saturday of injuries sustained in the calamity, raising the death toll to 786.

At least 400 people listed as missing were feared dead, the newspaper said.

At least 12,000 people were reported injured after the tornado swept through the district of Manikganj, some 40 kilometres northwest of the capital, Wednesday. It ravaged an area of 115 square kilometres sending people, houses, trees and electric poles flying.

An official at the Manikganj tornado control room said rescue workers were trying to remove the debris of a grain storage centre which had collapsed in the village of Satoria, the worst affected by the tornado.

Several people were taking shelter in the building at the time of the tornado, said the official.

The official said the disaster had left at least 130,000 people homeless and added that most of

them were living in the open, braving sharp showers that hit the area twice Saturday.

He said 325 tents had been erected to house the homeless and 315 wells bored for drinking water, which was in short supply. Food and medicines were being rushed to the area but rescue teams were yet to reach remote villages hit by the tornado, the official said.

The tornado, accompanied by hailstones and showers, came hours after President Hussain Mohammad Ershad led nationwide prayers for rains to ease a two-month-long drought.

In Dhaka alone, more than 75,000 people joined Ershad in a service at the national prayer ground.

In Satoria, 25,000 people congregated hours before the storm to pray for rain, residents and local authorities said.

The drought threatened to destroy half the 5.6-million-ton spring crop in the ground, Agriculture Ministry officials said.

Agriculture is the main occupation of most of the nation's 110 million people.

Bangladesh, with an annual per-capita income of \$160, which makes it one of the world's poorest countries, alternates between flood and drought.

Summer floods last year left four-fifths of the country under water, killing at least 1,400 people. In November, cyclones claimed 1,100.

Moscow rules out formal ties with Pretoria

CAPE TOWN (R) — Vyacheslav Ustinov, the first official Soviet visitor to South Africa for 33 years, received a top-level reception during a four-day stay ending Sunday but ruled out moves to set up diplomatic relations with Pretoria.

He said in an interview with Reuters he was in South Africa only to observe talks with Cuba and Angola on Namibian independence, but he left the door open for further contacts between Moscow and Pretoria.

"The most important thing is to put the plan for Namibian independence into full operation... that is the sole purpose of our visit."

"I have no intention and no instructions to discuss bilateral relations with South Africa," he said. "I do not expect that we will soon be talking about diplomatic relations."

The first thing he did in Cape Town during his four-day visit which ended Sunday was to visit the elegant building that housed the last Soviet mission to South Africa in 1956. But he said he was looking and not buying.

Asked whether a Soviet visit to South Africa was possible outside of the context of Namibian independence, he said: "I would rather come here when apartheid is dismantled and a true democratic state has been established."

Though it was Pretoria that cut diplomatic relations with Moscow in February 1956, Ustinov's dismissal of renewed ties was in contrast to the obvious South African effort to make him welcome and comfortable.



Jubilant pro-democracy cheering as they surround and blockade a truck carrying army troops during last week's demonstrations in Peking.

Peking activists defiant

PEKING (R) — Peking pro-democracy activists Sunday dismissed government talks with official student representatives as a ploy to divide the protest movement, but cancelled elections for a new student union.

Campuses were calm after two weeks of anti-government unrest, in an apparent lull before expected demonstrations May 4, the 70th anniversary of an early radical student movement.

Authorities broadcast through campus public address systems tape recordings of a meeting Saturday between government officials and 45 students mostly drawn from official student unions.

Demonstrating students have demanded "dialogue" with the government, preferably with Premier Li Peng. But students who joined the protest march which

paralysed the Chinese capital Thursday were unimpressed by the talks.

"This was a dialogue between the government and its own people, who do not represent us," one Peking University protest organiser said.

"The idea is to confuse ordinary students about what is going on and weaken our unity. The only aim of the government is to prevent another big march without making any concessions," he added.

The protesters demand punishment for police who beat demonstrating students, press freedom

and democratic reforms.

Activists at the university announced that elections earlier scheduled for Sunday had been cancelled, saying the time was not ripe. Several students said rifts among the members of an un-elected "preparatory committee" lay behind the decision.

The elections were to have been for leaders of a new autonomous student union to replace the existing, government-sponsored one.

At the Peking Teaching University, college officials Sunday regained control of the campus broadcasting office, which had been in the hands of protesters for nearly a week, students said.

Activists say further demonstrations are likely on or around May 4. The anniversary of the "May 4 Movement," which took patriotism, science and democracy as its slogans, will also be

officially celebrated as a key date in revolutionary history.

44 held in Xian

Police have arrested 44 people for looting and rioting in the central Chinese city of Xian eight days ago, People's Daily said Sunday.

The newspaper said other rioters would be treated leniently if they turned themselves in before Monday.

Angry, stone-throwing crowds attacked government buildings and set fire to cars and buses April 22 after a gathering to mourn late Communist Party leader Hu Yaobang turned violent.

The official media says 130 policemen were injured. Doctors at one hospital said more than 20 civilians were taken there for treatment of injuries.

World war gas used in Georgia, expert says

MOSCOW (R) — Soviet troops broke up a demonstration in Soviet Georgia earlier this month with a poison gas last used by Germany with devastating effect in the First World War, a senior Georgian scientist has said.

Mikhail Vashakidze, the chief toxicologist at the Georgian Health Ministry, said his use against demonstrators in the Georgian capital Tbilisi was a "stab in the back" for the Kremlin at a time when it was pressing for destruction of chemical weapons around the world.

Georgian officials have said at least two of the 20 people killed in the clash died from the effects of poison gas, while

others were killed by shovels and clubs.

In an interview with the Georgian Communist Party daily Zarya Vostoka, Vashakidze identified the dangerous chemical substance in the gas as chloroacetophenone.

"This substance was used by German troops twice in the course of the First World War against the troops of the entente (Russia, France and Britain)," he said in the Thursday edition of the newspaper, which reached Moscow Sunday.

"In both cases the consequences were very tragic. Several thousand soldiers were seriously poisoned. Since then it has not been used in military actions."

Central Moscow authorities say the soldiers fired ordinary tear gas at the crowd and that the question of whether a stronger gas was used will be answered by official investigations that are under way.

Chloroacetophenone, which is produced synthetically, causes serious injury to bodily organs as well as eye irritation, coughing and headache, Vashakidze said. He said its effect depended on the concentrations used.

The chemical, an irritating white crystal, can be used in solution as a tear gas and is also called phenacyl chloride.

The Soviet Union told an international conference on chemical weapons in Paris in

January it would start unilaterally destroying its chemical weapons stocks this year.

Moscow, which says it has 50,000 tonnes of such weapons, is urging a global ban on them at a Geneva conference on disarmament.

Zarya Vostoka said chloroacetophenone was only one of the chemical substances used by soldiers to disperse the crowd of 10,000 people, who for four nights had been singing Georgian songs and waving national flags.

The chemical was fired into the Georgian State Theatre Institute where some protesters tried to hide, the newspaper said.

It said the Health Ministry's

laboratory determined the kind of gas used by analysing remains of food that had been found inside the institute.

The same issue of the newspaper said that Wednesday 70 children from the neighbourhood where the demonstration took place were taken to hospital in Tbilisi with symptoms suggesting they had inhaled a poisonous gas.

The Soviet military newspaper Krasnaya Zvezda said there had been more than 30 physical attacks on soldiers in Tbilisi since the incident.

It said one major is being treated for concussion after being hit over the head in a subway tunnel.

Sihanouk favours Khmer Rouge role

BANGKOK (R) — Exiled Kampuchean leader Prince Norodom Sihanouk is willing to include the Khmer Rouge in any settlement on Kampuchea, his son and spokesman said.

Speaking as his father left Bangkok Sunday for Indonesia, Prince Norodom Ranariddh told reporters:

"If we are searching for real peace in Kampuchea, we cannot put aside anyone, yes, especially the Khmer Rouge."

Sihanouk, who heads a coalition of three guerrilla factions fighting in Kampuchea, was flying to Jakarta for talks with Hun Sen, the Vietnamese-backed leader of the Phnom Penh government.

The communist Khmer Rouge are the most powerful element in the opposition but have been condemned for their brutal rule between 1975 and 1978.

Sihanouk was cautiously optimistic as he left Thailand and indicated he was prepared to be flexible in negotiations with Hun Sen, which open Tuesday.

"I hope to make progress to-

wards a breakthrough," he told reporters.

In a speech in Bangkok Saturday the prince dropped his demand for the United Nations to supervise the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Kampuchea, promised by Hanoi for the end of September, and subsequent elections.

Asked about this as he left, he said: "We may soften our stand in order to work out a solution."

In the Cuban capital Havana, Vietnamese leader Nguyen Van Linh Saturday rejected the U.N. peacekeeping role during a projected withdrawal of troops.

Three previous Sihanouk-Hun Sen meetings since late 1987, and an international peace conference in Jakarta in March made no significant progress.

The major development since then was the April 5 declaration by Phnom Penh and Hanoi that 50,000 Vietnamese troops who stayed on after toppling the Khmer Rouge in 1979 would pull out by Sept. 30.

While the Phnom Penh government and the guerrillas, who en-



Norodom Sihanouk

joyed United Nations recognition, remain far apart, each side has given signs of a willingness to negotiate.

The Jakarta talks, to be attended also by Sihanouk's non-communist ally Son Sann, initiate a hectic round of contacts between the fighting factions and their backers throughout May.

Each of the factions will meet Thai Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan, who has emerged as a middle-man, in Bangkok after the Jakarta talks, and Sihanouk proposed all four factions meet in Bangkok at that time.

'Copycats' hit Heinz babyfood in Illinois

SPRINGFIELD, Illinois (R) — Babyfood made by H.J. Heinz was removed from shelves in three supermarkets here after a babysitter found straight pins in two jars of babyfood made by the firm, police said Saturday.

A Heinz spokesman said the company believed the isolated incident was "copycat tampering" possibly inspired by a wave of contamination incidents and an extortion demand in Britain.

Commander Kirk Robinson, a Springfield police spokesman, said a couple brought in jars of Heinz strained apple sauce and strained greenbeans Friday in which they said their babysitter had discovered straight pins.

"The child did not eat any of the sauce or the beans and we X-rayed 17 other jars the family had and they were okay," said Robinson.

He said precautionary warnings were put out on local radio and television news shows and the local shop Save chain where the babyfood was purchased had pulled Heinz products from shelves in its three stores in the

Springfield area. Harry Carroll, a spokesman for the Heinz U.S. division of the Heinz Company, said the company was cooperating with police.

"The company believes the incident may be a 'copycat tampering' triggered by recent publicity about an extortion attempt in England involving Heinz babyfood and products of other companies," Carroll said.

In Britain, three major British retail chains withdrew baby food from store shelves Saturday because a widening blackmail contamination scare.

Five babies have been treated in hospitals and 300 cases reported of baby food spiked with glass and metal after Heinz received an extortion demand for \$1.7 million.

"It is certain that the contamination did not occur during the manufacturing process," the statement continued. "In fact, the two products involved, strained apple sauce and strained green beans, were produced a number of months apart on different filling lines."

COLUMN

Eastwood faces legal barrel

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Actor Clint Eastwood is being sued for financial support by actress-director Sondra Locke, who said he persuaded her to undergo two abortions and a tubal ligation during their 10-year affair. The superior court lawsuit alleges that in return for acting virtually as Eastwood's wife, the actor promised to support Locke, 41, for life. It also claimed Eastwood, 58, bought two homes for his co-star in such films as "The Gauntlet" and "The Outlaw Josey Wales," but kicked her and a pet parrot out of one April 10. The couple broke up in December. According to the lawsuit, Eastwood arranged for Locke to have two abortions and asked her to have a tubal ligation. Eastwood has a son and daughter from a previous marriage. The lawsuit seeks unspecified damages and an equal division of property acquired during the relationship. It also asks that Locke be given title to both houses.

From nuptial bed to 13 years in jail

TUSCON, Arizona (AP) — The groom left in handcuffs and the bride left in tears after a judge presided over their wedding and then sentenced the man to 13 years in prison on a cocaine conviction. Alex J. Pedrin's eight-year-old daughter and four-year-old son from a previous marriage sat impassively next to their grandmother as their handcuffed father was led away after being sentenced by Judge Nanette Warner. However, Pedrin's new wife, 28-year-old Belinda Hoefer, who is expecting his child in September, began crying softly when the sentence was announced and left the courtroom in tears. Under state law, Pedrin, 31, must serve the full term because a plea bargain with prosecutors required him to admit to a previous conviction for burglary. Pedrin's first wife was stabbed to death in February 1987. A friend of the couple was convicted of murder and sentenced to death for the killing.

Expensive quest for a bride

GENEVA (AP) — A small slot in the personals section was not enough for Jean-Claude, a low-level businessman who took a full page in a Geneva newspaper to seek out his dream woman — to the tune of \$3,744. "I am looking for a very special woman who would like to share adventures and a taste of the high life with me on an occasional basis," said the advertisement in the La Suisse daily by Jean-Claude, who identified himself only by his first name. A spokesman for the newspaper said it was the most expensive personal advertisement it had ever printed. The 39-year-old Geneva businessman, who said he was recovering from a broken relationship, told the AP the advertisement was no joke.

Wives may sue husbands for rape

MANILA (AP) — A bill filed by the vice president of the Philippine senate would open the way for wives to charge their husbands with rape. Wives can refuse to have sex with their husbands if they have AIDS or any venereal disease, have been abandoned them for over a year or when special circumstances exist, according to the bill filed Friday by Senate Vice-President Teofisto Guingona. "Women had been in the short end of most deals vis-a-vis the menfolk. And even our present penal laws reflect the advantage stacked in favour of husbands," Guingona said in his proposed law. "The aim of this bill is to protect wives from all types of physical violation, even from their own husbands."

Global weather

(major world cities)

	MIN.	MAX.	WIND
AMSTERDAM	02	16	61 Clear
ATHENS	12	24	72 Clear
BAHRAIN	23	30	86 Clear
BANGKOK	28	35	85 Clear
BUENOS AIRES	04	16	60 Cloudy
CAIRO	32	40	104 Cloudy
CHICAGO	08	47	67 Cloudy
COPENHAGEN	03	11	52 Clear
FRANKFURT	02	11	55 Clear
GENEVA	03	17	63 Cloudy
HONG KONG	23	29	84 Clear
ISTANBUL	12	24	72 Cloudy
LONDON	08	43	101 Clear
LOS ANGELES	63	85	77 Cloudy
MADRID	02	16	60 Clear
MEXICO	26	79	105 Cloudy
MIAMI	01	34	93 Cloudy
MONTECARLO	01	34	93 Cloudy
MOSCOW	08	48	100 Clear
NEW DELHI	21	70	158 Clear
NEW YORK	05	41	105 Clear
PARIS	05	41	105 Clear
ROME	07	45	113 Clear
TOKYO	10	20	68 Cloudy
VIENNA	02	17	63 Clear

WORLD NEWS IN BRIEF

Many Britons disenchanted with Thatcher

LONDON (AP) — Two public opinion polls published Sunday reveal growing public disenchantment with Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher as she approaches 10 years in power. In a Harris poll commissioned by the Observer newspaper, 40 per cent of the respondents said they would like Thatcher to retire immediately, eight per cent said she should go within a year and 10 per cent want her to step down before the next election. But 30 per cent of those polled said they think it would be five to 10 years before Thatcher retires and 28 per cent predicted she would die in office. Two-thirds of the 1,040 people questioned in the April 19-20 poll believe Thatcher has "gone too far with her policies." A Gallup poll taken for the Sunday Telegraph, a pro-Thatcher weekly newspaper, said three-quarters of those polled believe Thatcher has brought about a decline in public services, such as roads, schools and public hospitals. In addition, 54 per cent of those surveyed thought the phrase "Thatcher's Britain" derogatory connotations.

Sergio Leone dies of heart attack

ROME (R) — Italian film director Sergio Leone died in Rome early Sunday after suffering a heart attack, his family said. Leone, 60, was best known for his international successful "spaghetti westerns" such as "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly," and "Once Upon A Time in the West."

Aquino guards killed in attack

MANILA (AP) — Suspected communist hitmen gunned down two members of Philippine President Corason Aquino's security group in Manila Sunday, police said. Police said six men approached Troy Lampreya and Clemente Requene after they had boarded their jeep and shot them in the head before dragging them out of the vehicle. The attackers shot the soldiers again as they lay on the ground, police added. Rodolfo Janer, a police investigator, said the gunmen warned onlookers not to interfere and said they were members of the New People's Army (NPA). Janer said the attackers took an M-16 rifle from the slain soldiers and fled aboard a commandeered jeep. Another presidential guard, Clemente Rapinat, escaped the attack, he said.

Tornado hits Indian missile launch site

NEW DELHI (AP) — A tornado swept through areas around a missile launch site in eastern India, leaving at least 10 people dead and more than 100 injured, the United News of India (UNI) reported Sunday. The news agency said Friday's tornado also blew away about 50,000 huts in the district of Balasore in Orissa state. The storm however has not affected preparations for the launch of the Prithvi missile, the Press Trust of India said. The missile is scheduled to be launched from the Chandipur launch site in Balasore district, about 1,200 kilometres southeast of New Delhi. An attempt to fire the missile April 29 was cancelled because of a last-minute hitch in its ignition system.

Allergy season; sniffing, sneezing abound

By Tom Sharp
The Associated Press

KNOXVILLE, Tennessee — Researchers continue to search for drugs to prevent allergic reactions from starting, but until they succeed, 35 million allergic Americans will just have to keep fighting the nagging symptoms.

There currently is "no way to attack the central source and make it go away," said Gerald Vanderpool of American Allergy Consultants in Atlanta. "So basically you have to deal with it. There are ways now to keep a patient fairly

comfortable. Not many years ago, it was a voodoo and witchcraft specialty."

An allergic reaction is the immune system's overzealous response to an otherwise harmless substance, such as pollen, dust, penicillin or cat dandruff. The body releases powerful chemicals that cause those classic symptoms: runny nose, watery eyes, rash or, in asthma, constriction of the breathing passages.

Of 35 million allergic Americans, 14.6 million suffer from hay fever, nearly nine million have asthma and 11.8 million have eczema, hives, swelling or

an allergic reaction to food, medicine or insect stings.

The discovery that modernised allergy treatment was immunoglobulin E, or IGE, an antibody found in much higher levels in allergic people. Antibodies fight foreign substances in the body: when IGE cells come into contact with a foreign substance, they release histamine, a chemical that causes swelling and itching.

A better understanding of the allergic reaction and better medication are making life more bearable for people with allergies, said Dr. Allen Kaplan, president of the American Academy of Allergy and

Immunology. A prime example is the use of steroids that can be inhaled to treat asthma.

"Previously, the most severe asthmatics had to take steroids by pills. Administering them through inhalation gets a very concentrated dose into the lungs without significant absorption into the rest of the circulation," Kaplan said. "Therefore it minimises the side effects of steroids and optimises therapy to the lungs because you're delivering it directly."

...asthma drug is cro-

tion of mast cells, which are involved in all allergic reactions.

"In both these instances we're treating the reaction locally in a reasonably potent way," Kaplan said. "They really work better than treatments we've used in the past."

Allergy treatments have for years relied on antihistamines, which combat the chemical responsible for many allergy symptoms. Kaplan said antihistamines have advanced in two significant ways: versions are available that do not cause drowsiness, and timed-release pills only need to be taken or twice a day.

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